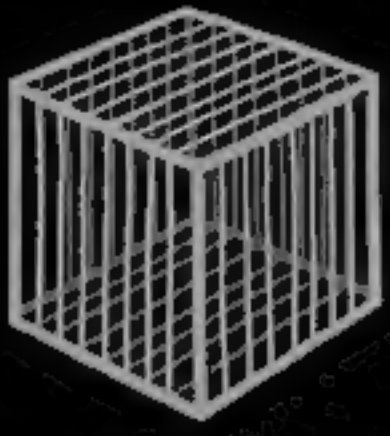
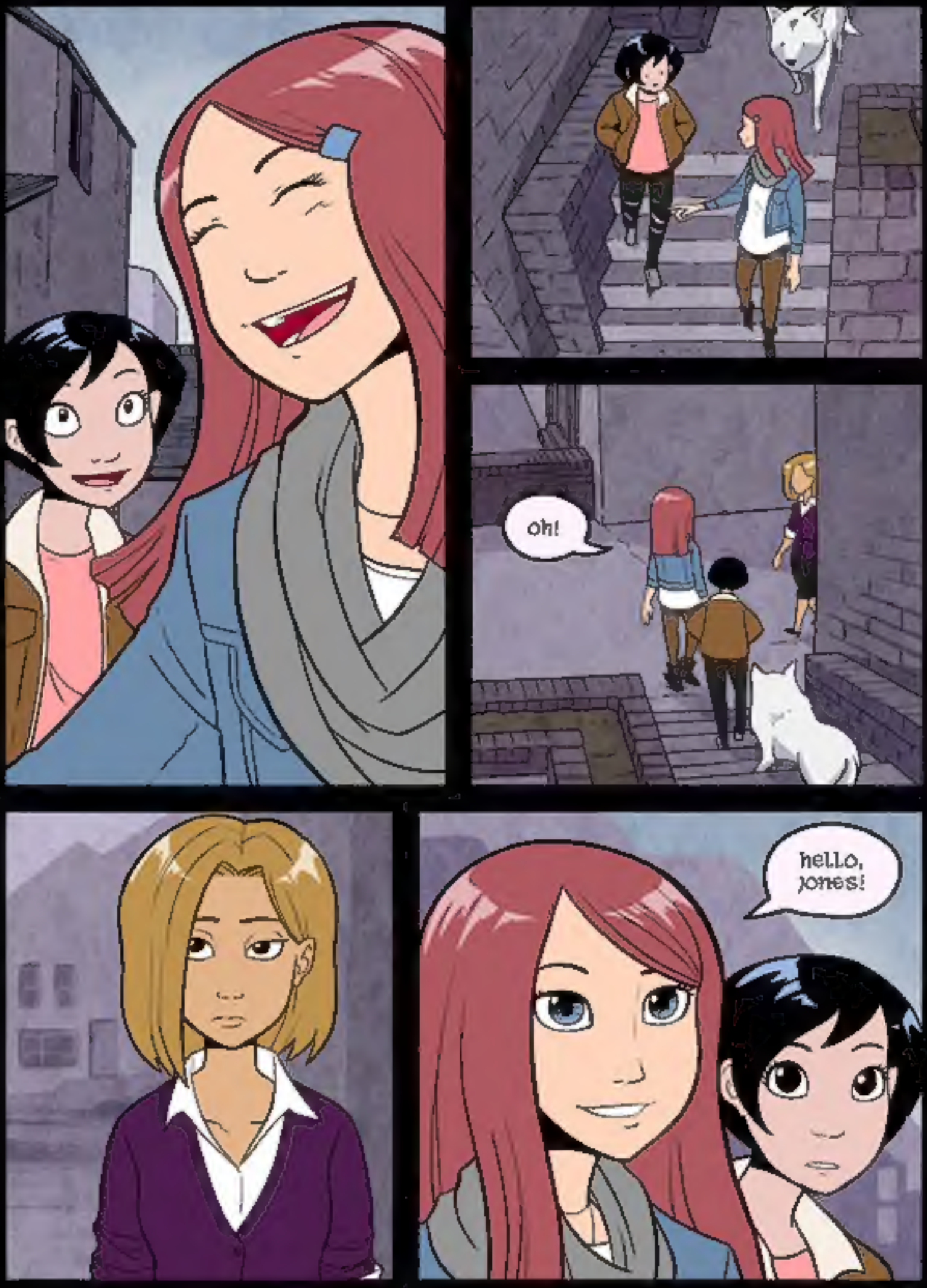
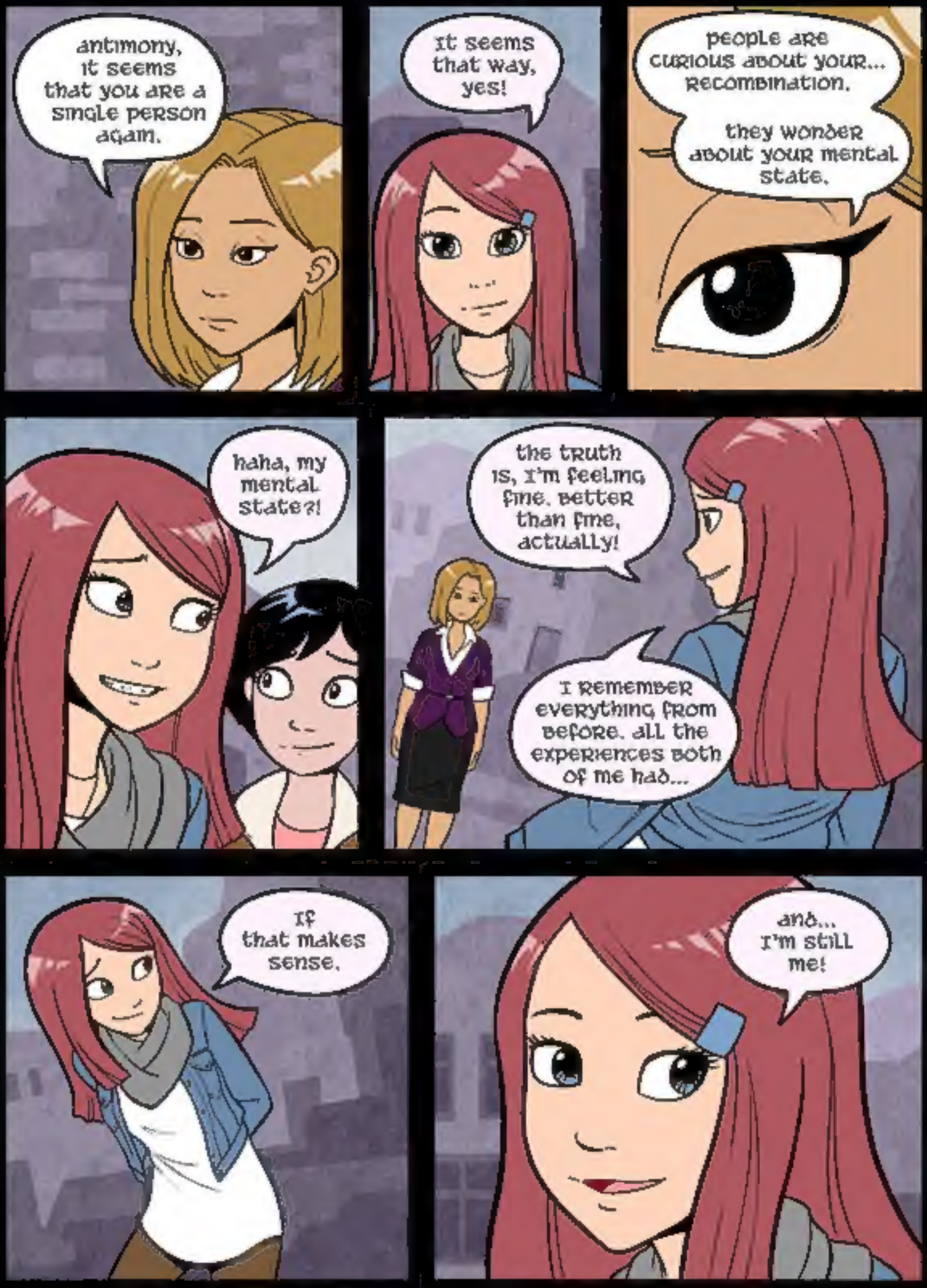
Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 80:

The Mind Cage



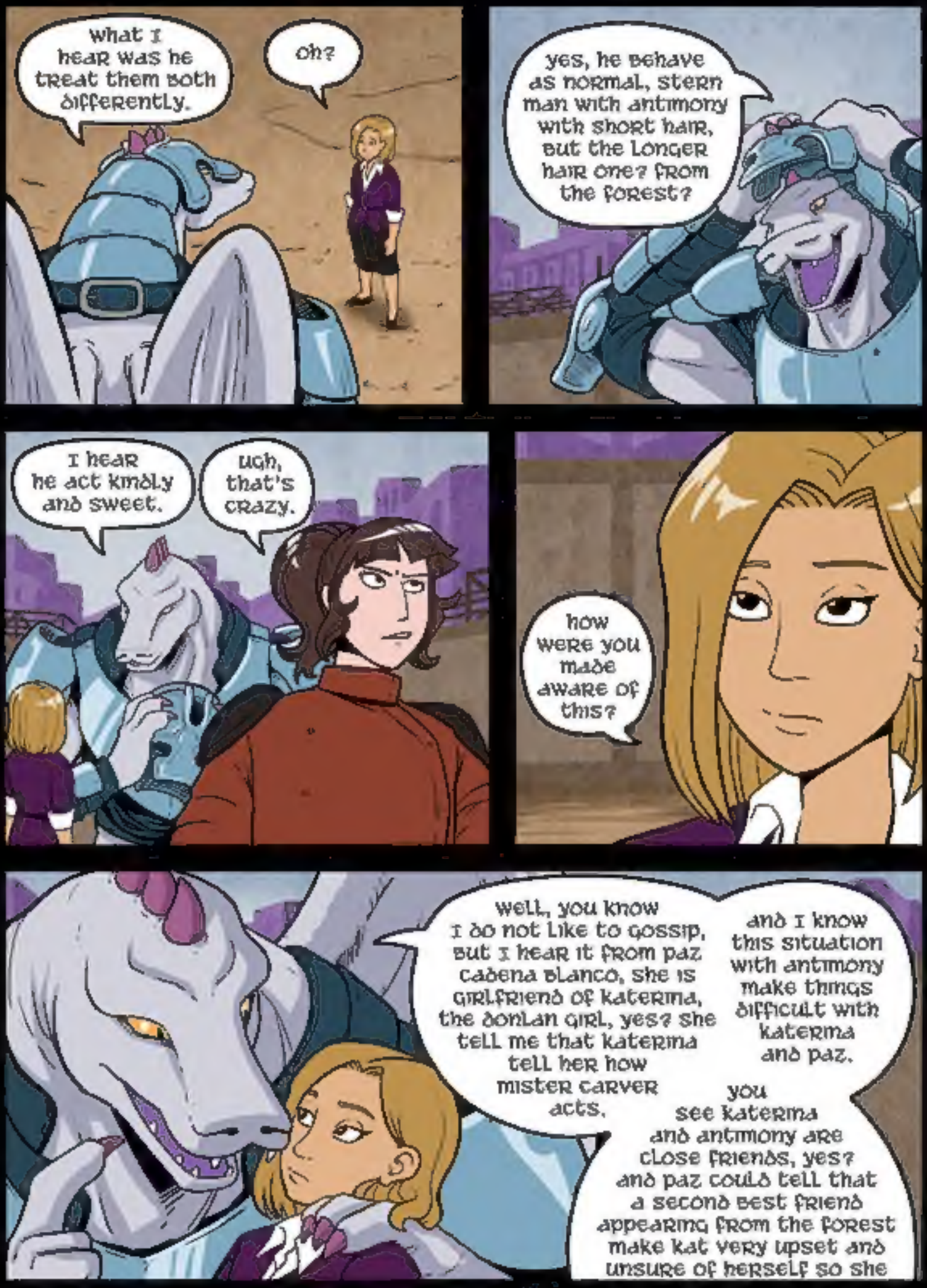

oh!
hello, jones!

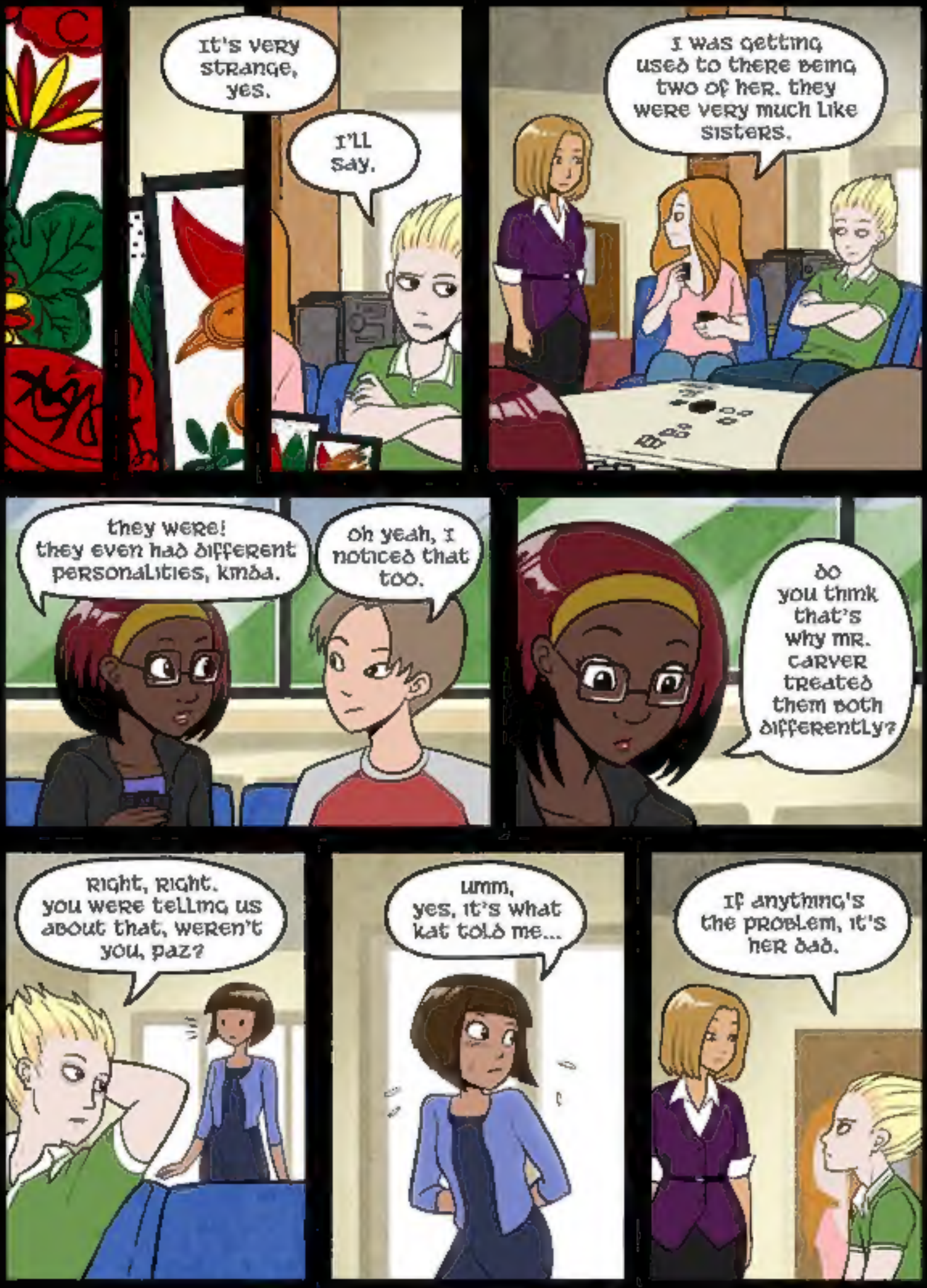

antimony, it seems that you are a single person again.
it seems that way, yes!
people are curious about your... recombination.
they wonder about your mental state.
haha, my mental state?!
the truth is, I'm feeling fine. better than fine, actually!
I remember everything from before. all the experiences both of me had...
if that makes sense.
and... I'm still me!

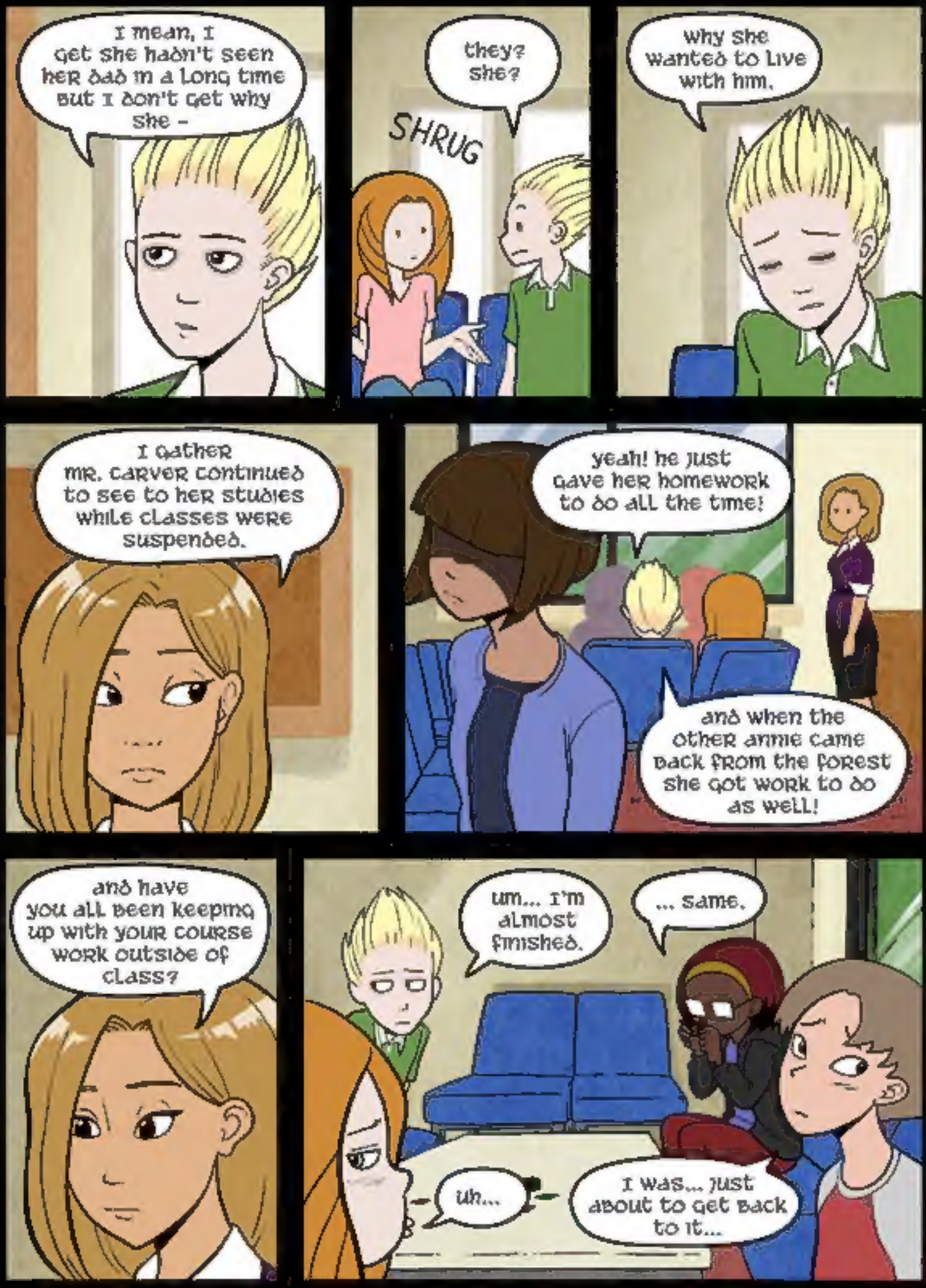

anyway, we have to get going!
we should sit down and talk soon, jones.
bye!
um, bye!

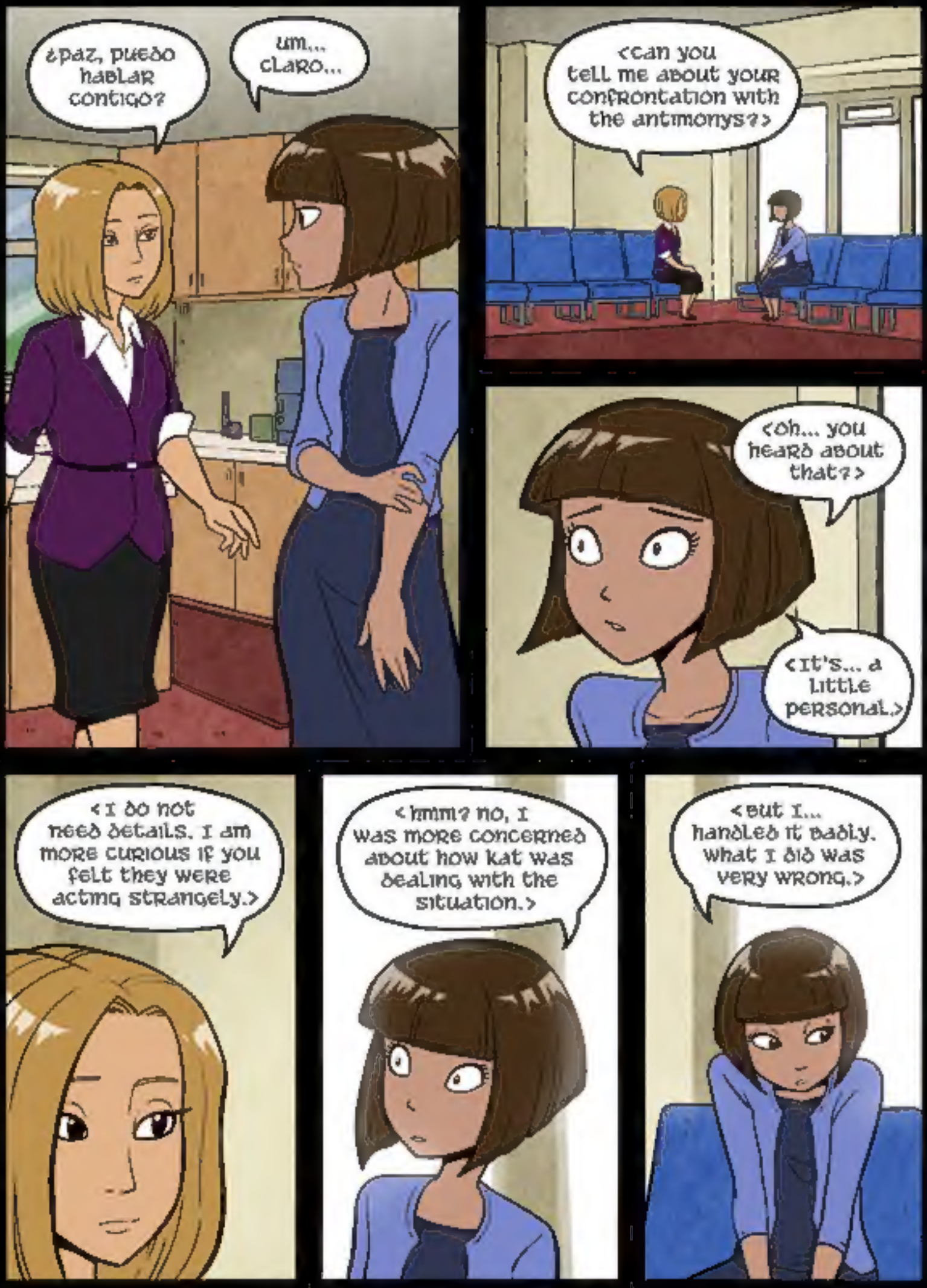

Earlier
annie? oh, yeah, it's crazy.
one minute there's two of them and now she's one person again?
she doesn't seem different though, really.
more confident I suppose.
she is much more sure of her powers now.
oh, definitely, her fire power is way stronger.

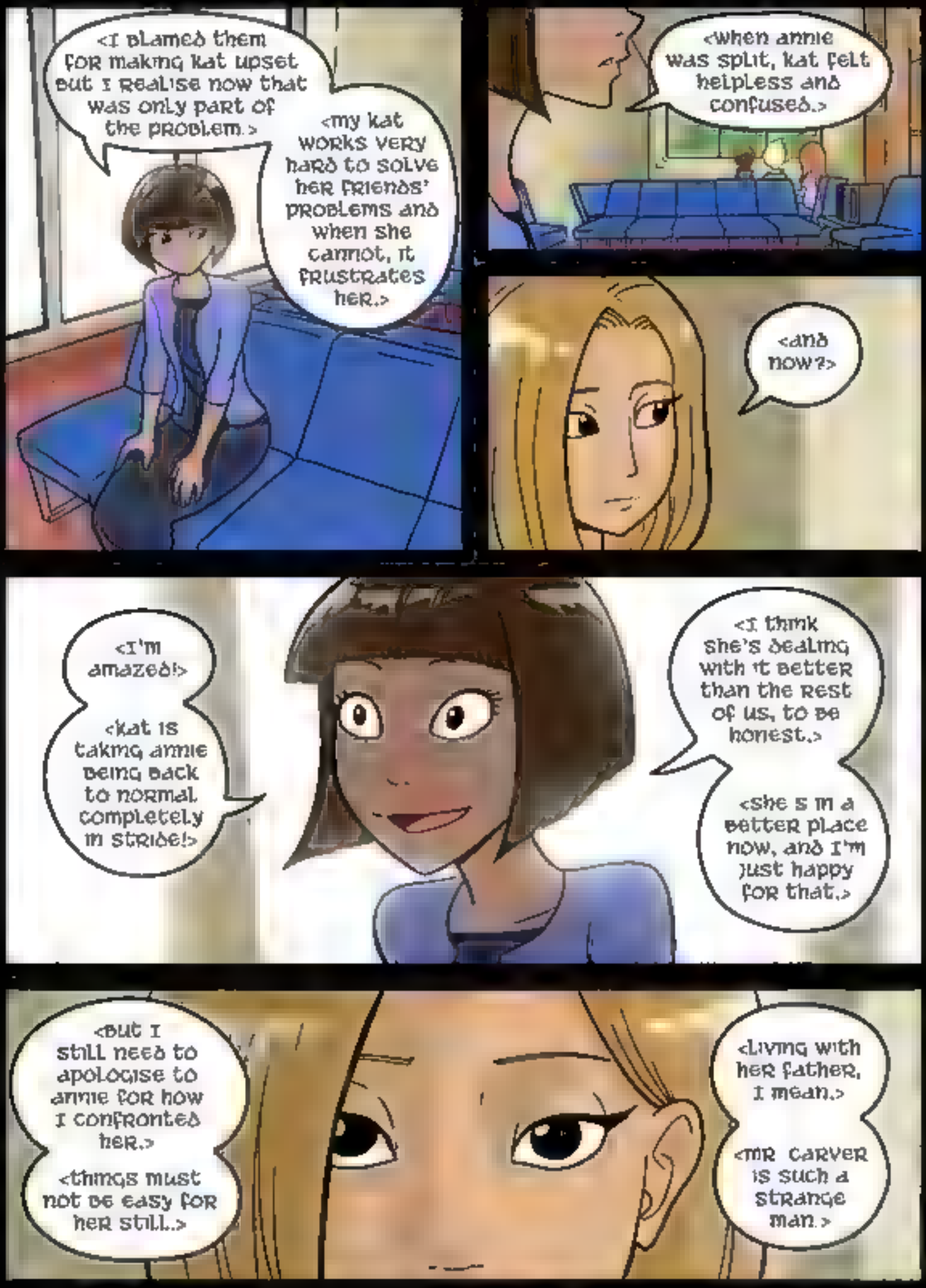

It's like the fire itself is twice as strong now.
She remembers developing that fire beam of hers, but now she has to tone it down.
It'll be useful against any forest monsters we might face.
this is very strange for her father, yes?
who knows?
you know Mr. Carver, right, Jones?
I do.
the way Eglamore talks about him, I doubt he'd even notice Annie is just one person again.
I don't know the guy really, but just hearing how he treats Annie pisses me off.


what I hear was he treat them both differently.
oh?
yes, he behave as normal, stern man with antimony with short hair, but the longer hair one? from the forest?
I hear he act kindly and sweet.
ugh, that's crazy.
how were you made aware of this?
well, you know I do not like to gossip, but I hear it from paz cadena blanco, she is girlfriend of katerina, the donlan girl, yes? she tell me that katerina tell her how mister carver acts.
and I know this situation with antimony make things difficult with katerma and paz.
you see katerma and antimony are close friends, yes? and paz could tell that a second best friend appearing from the forest make kat very upset and unsure of herself so she


It's very strange, yes.
I'll say.
I was getting used to there being two of her. they were very much like sisters.
they were! they even had different personalities, kinda.
oh yeah, I noticed that too.
do you think that's why mr. carver treated them both differently?
Right, Right. you were telling us about that, weren't you, paz?
umm, yes, it's what kat told me...
If anything's the problem, it's her dad.


I mean, I get she hadn't seen her dad in a long time but I don't get why she -
they? she?
SHRUG
why she wanted to live with him.
I gather mr. carver continued to see to her studies while classes were suspended.
yeah! he just gave her homework to do all the time!
and when the other anne came back from the forest she got work to do as well!
and have you all been keeping up with your course work outside of class?
um... I'm almost finished.
... same.
uh...
I was... just about to get back to it...


¿paz, puedo hablar contigo?
um... claro...
<can you tell me about your confrontation with the antimonys?>
<oh... you heard about that?>
<it's... a little personal.>
<I do not need details. I am more curious if you felt they were acting strangely.>
<hmm? no, I was more concerned about how kat was dealing with the situation.>
<but I... handled it badly. what I did was very wrong.>


<I blamed them for making Kat upset but I realise now that was only part of the problem.>
<my kat works very hard to solve her friends' problems and when she cannot, it frustrates her.>
<when annie was split, kat felt helpless and confused.>
<and now?>
<I'm amazed!>
<kat is taking annie being back to normal completely in stride!>
<I think she's dealing with it better than the rest of us, to be honest.>
<she s in a better place now, and I'm just happy for that.>
<But I still need to apologise to annie for how I confronted her.>
<things must not be easy for her still..>
<living with her father, I mean.>
<mr carver is such a strange man.>


what's this, the court have you doing psych recon now, jonsey?
I just need to evaluate her mental state.
you talked to parley, right?
we both saw what her fire powers are capable of now and it looks like she's none the worse for her... experience.
this is the red hair?
I think she has a thing for ya' jim
oof don't even joke about that

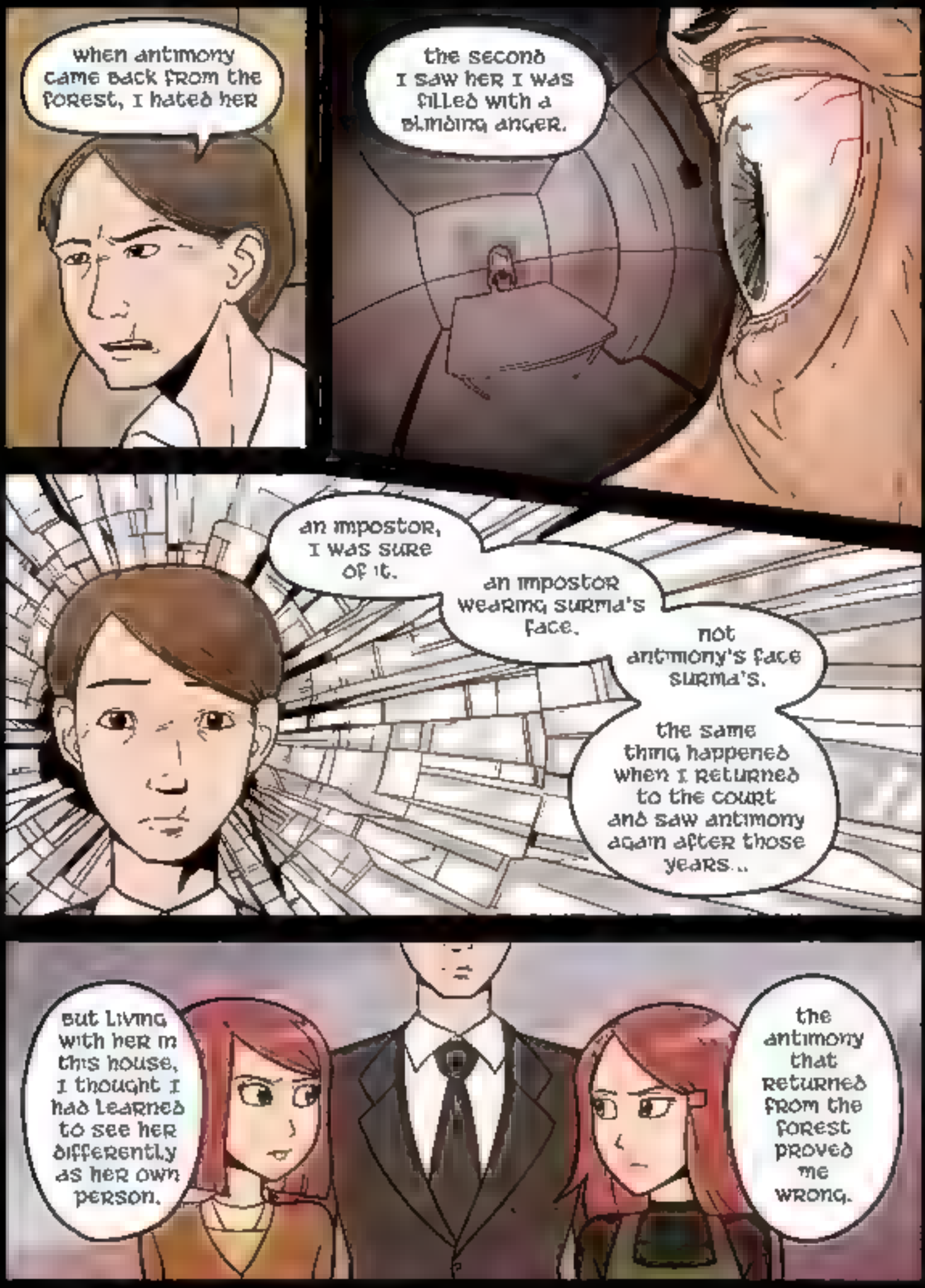

If you're worried about anything, I'd start with Carver.
I mean, Tony.
Oh come on, Jim.
I know, Don, I know.
But what business does he have interfering with her life right now?
The kids are lost enough as it is, without structure and a plan for the future.
It's got to be hard for them.
Wait, wait. This Tony, this is her Da' right?
He's got every right to be in her life!
You don't know the man, Iora

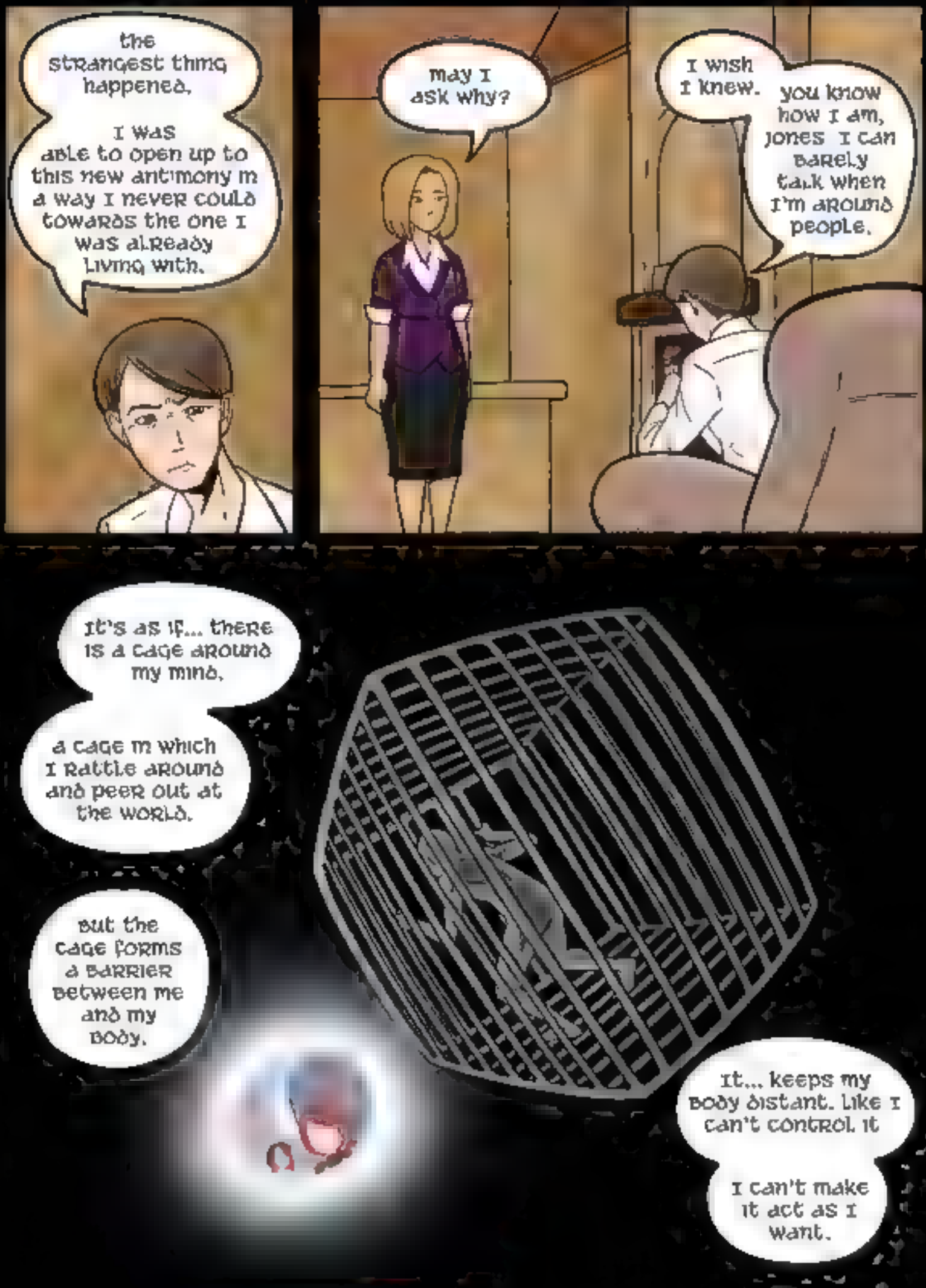

he's a weirdo, right? that's what you keep sayin'
but a young lass like annie, it's good to have her old man around, surely.
I think it's odd you make your kids live away from their parents as it is.
we just want them to be independent, that's all.
yeah? what for?
well... so... they can live full lives of their own choosing. follow their own pursuits
so they get influences from everything but their parents?
it's not like that. we just do things differently than the forest here.
seems as you do.

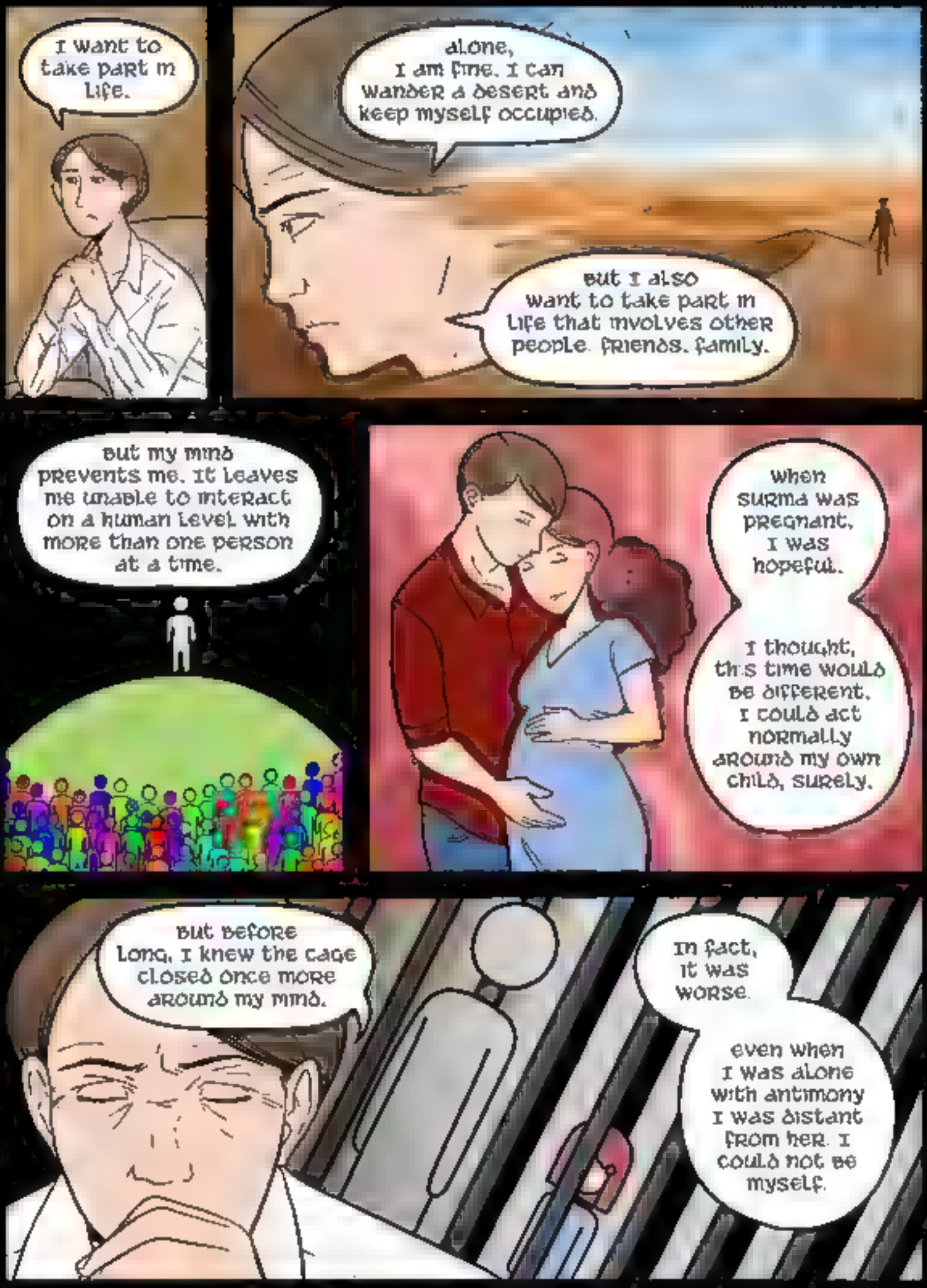

tony was missing for years before deciding to waltz back into the court. I saw what that did to antimony
so which is it?
is it bad if he's gone, or bad if he's here?
both, I guess!
but really, it might have been better if he stayed missing.
rough, man rough.
there were times when antimony seemed a little unruly before her father's return.
would you agree?
y-yes, miss jones.
hum. annie had all the attention of your court and coyote in the forest an' no parents to keep her in check?
no wonder she got spoiled.


I wouldn't say spoiled.
headstrong, maybe?
donald, your thoughts?
you've perhaps known anthony the longest
well..
it's because I've known him the longest I would suggest...
talking to him directly?


It feels like...
I've lost a daughter.


when antimony came back from the forest, I hated her
the second I saw her I was filled with a blinding anger.
an impostor, I was sure of it.
an impostor wearing surma's face.
not antimony's face surma's.
the same thing happened when I returned to the court and saw antimony again after those years..
but living with her in this house, I thought I had learned to see her differently as her own person.
the antimony that returned from the forest proved me wrong.


the strangest thing happened.
I was able to open up to this new antimony in a way I never could towards the one I was already living with.
may I ask why?
I wish I knew.
you know how I am, jones I can barely talk when I'm around people.
it's as if... there is a cage around my mind.
a cage in which I rattle around and peer out at the world.
but the cage forms a barrier between me and my body.
it... keeps my body distant. like I can't control it
I can't make it act as I want.

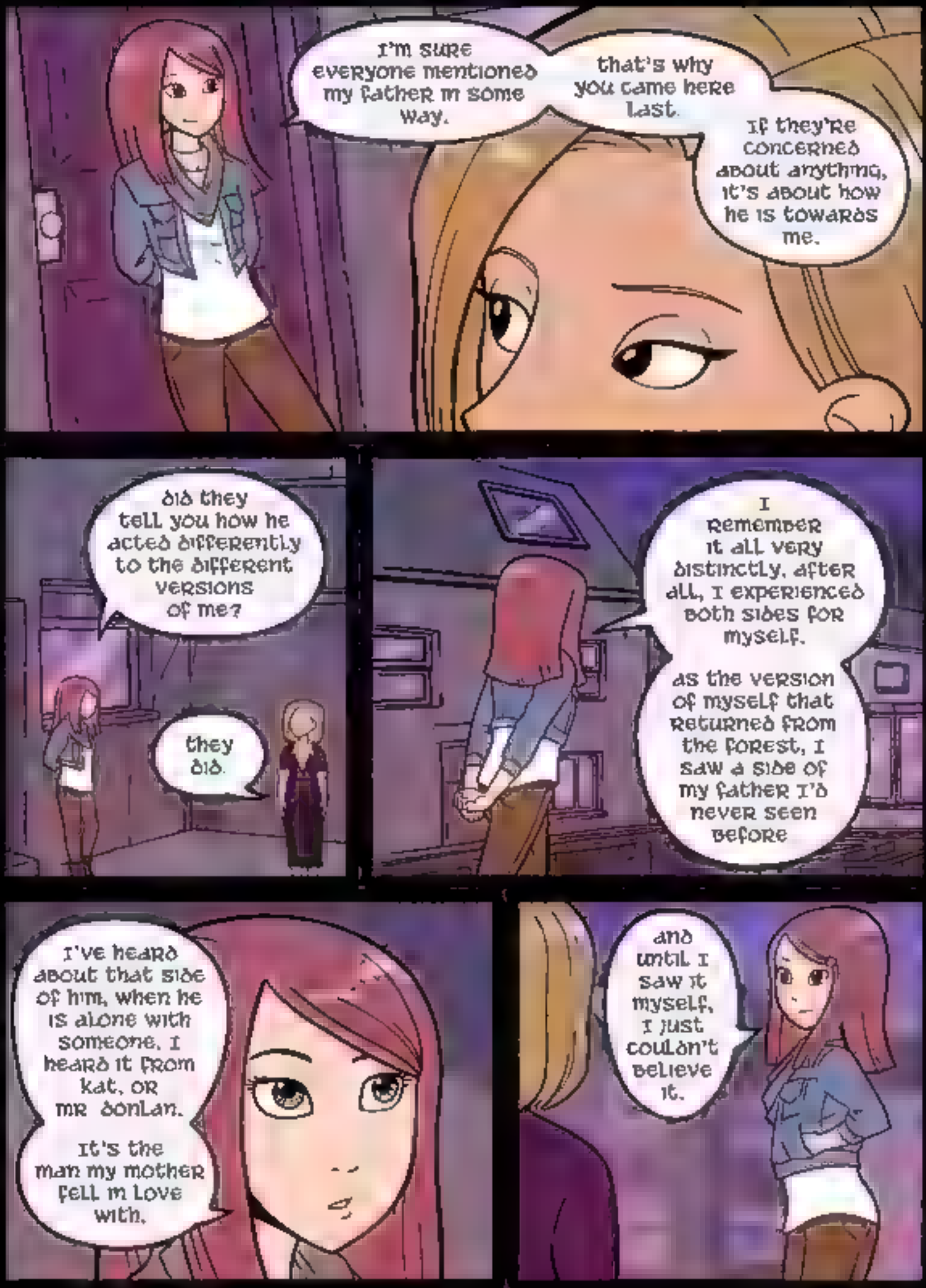

I want to take part in life.
alone, I am fine. I can wander a desert and keep myself occupied.
but I also want to take part in life that involves other people. friends. family.
but my mind prevents me. it leaves me unable to interact on a human level with more than one person at a time.
when surma was pregnant, I was hopeful.
I thought, this time would be different. I could act normally around my own child, surely.
but before long, I knew the cage closed once more around my mind.
in fact, it was worse.
even when I was alone with antimony I was distant from her. I could not be myself.

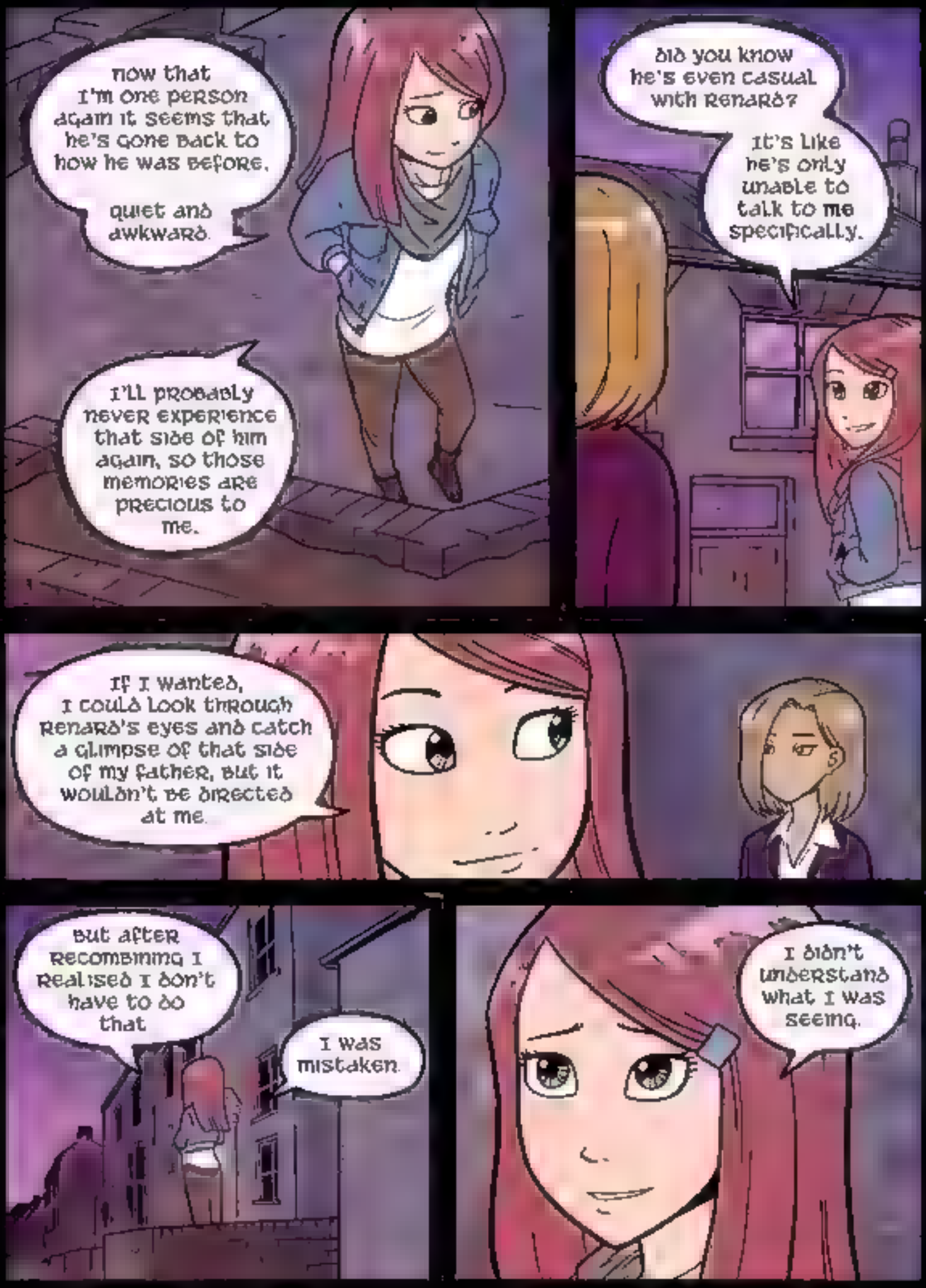

I came to see her almost as two people my little girl, of course, but also a vision of surma.
It was just... the physicality of it.
my daughter.
surma.
two people.
so my mind closed off to her. no matter how I wished otherwise.
and then the antimony who returned from the forest.
an impostor? perhaps.
but she was a new person, a stranger an individual.
my mind allowed me to open up in a way I could not before.
in short order I'd found what I was missing; the ability to show my daughter how I was inside.

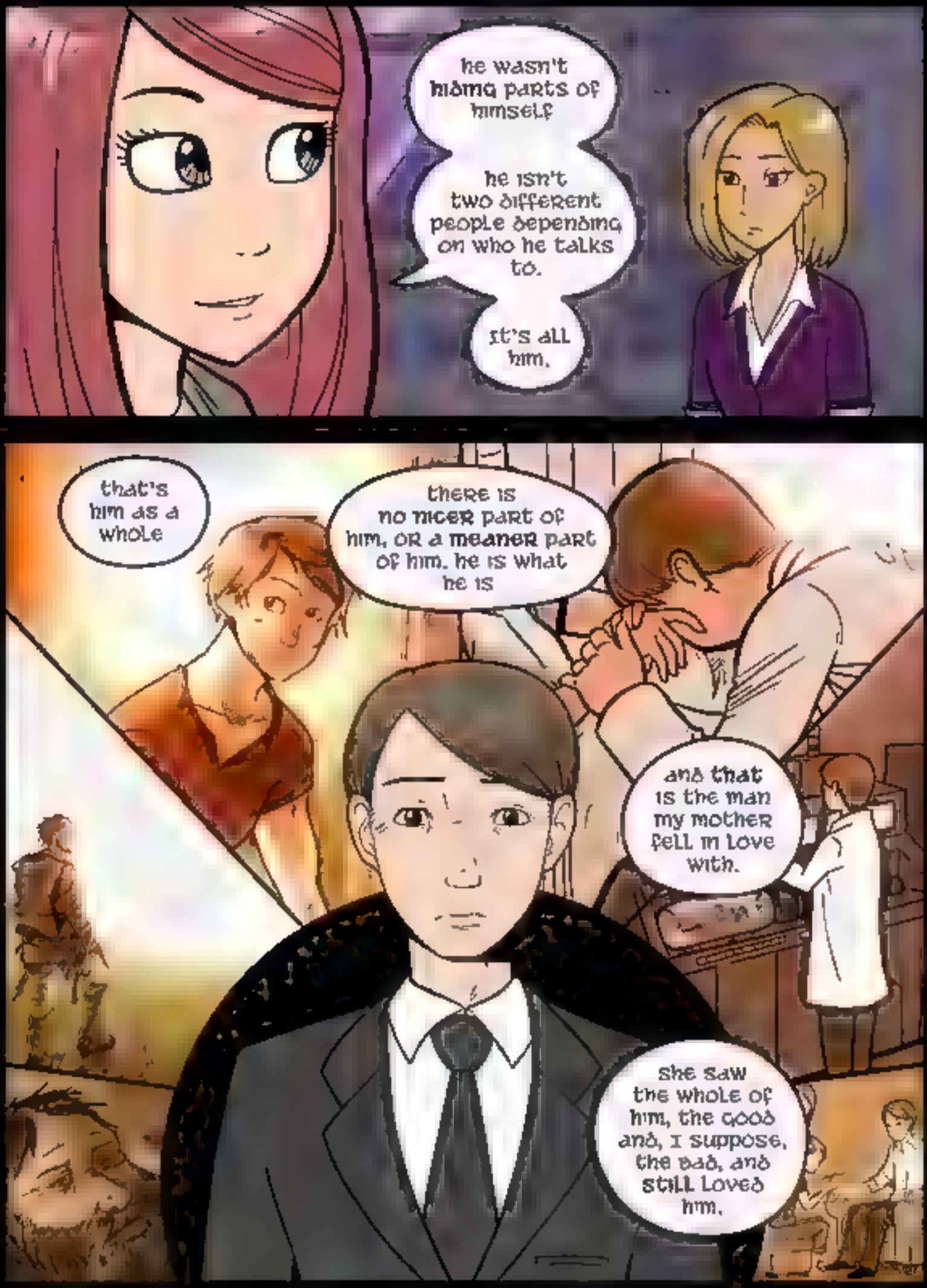

and now...
antimony is one again.
and... my cruel mind has me closed off once more.
my heart broke when I lost surma
and it remains broken still
as I peer out at my daughter
unable to reach her.
unable to show her how much I love her


you could just tell her this
yes.
the answer is so simple
tell me, jones what else would you recommend to someone with a mind like mine?
minds seem to have similar shapes, and while all human minds may share certain natures, in all my millennia I have never encountered two that are the same
but I do recognise grief.
a uniquely human emotion I am unable to experience.
I have learned that you should take care not to be consumed by it.
and that it is something you should not deny.

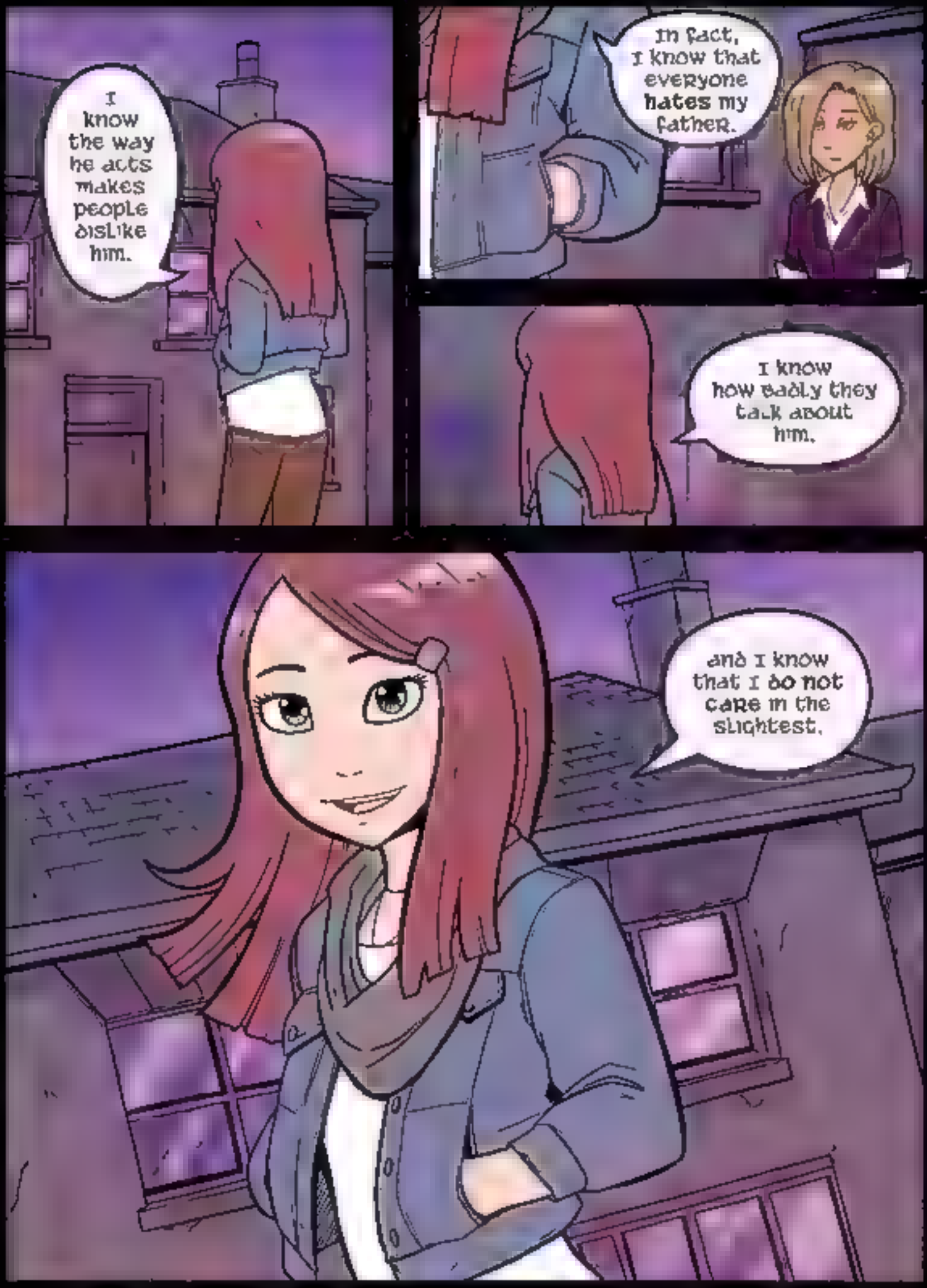

oh.
I'll just be a moment, Renard
you've been talking to my father?
I have. I have spoken to many people today, about you.
I see.
It seems everyone is pleased to see you back to normal.
they mention your happier mood and increased confidence.
yes, like I told you earlier, I feel much better.
but I'll bet that's not the only thing people said.

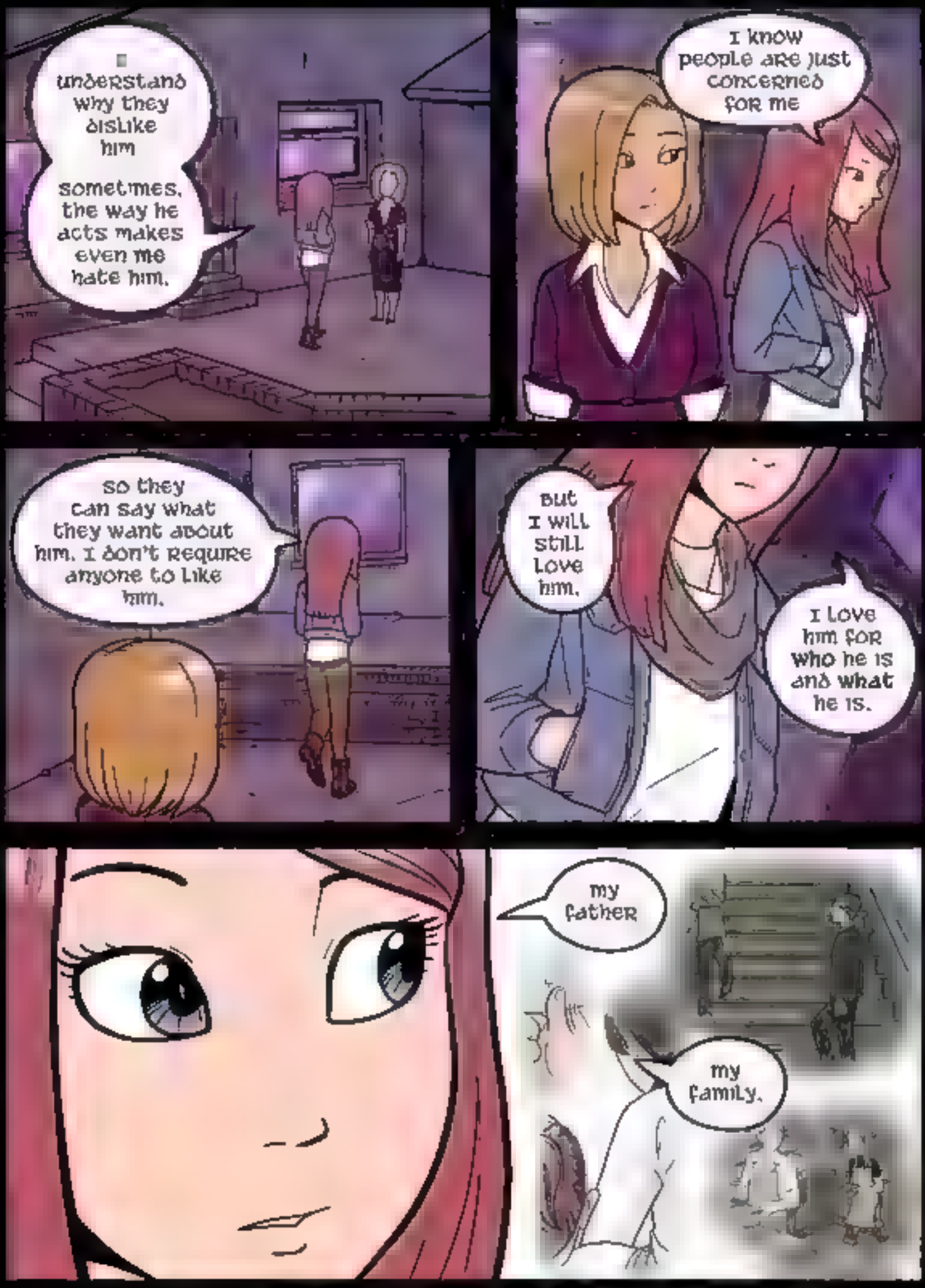

I'm sure everyone mentioned my father in some way.
that's why you came here last.
If they're concerned about anything, it's about how he is towards me.
did they tell you how he acted differently to the different versions of me?
they did.
I remember it all very distinctly. after all, I experienced both sides for myself.
as the version of myself that returned from the forest, I saw a side of my father I'd never seen before
I've heard about that side of him, when he is alone with someone. I heard it from kat, or mr donlan.
It's the man my mother fell in love with.
and until I saw it myself, I just couldn't believe it.

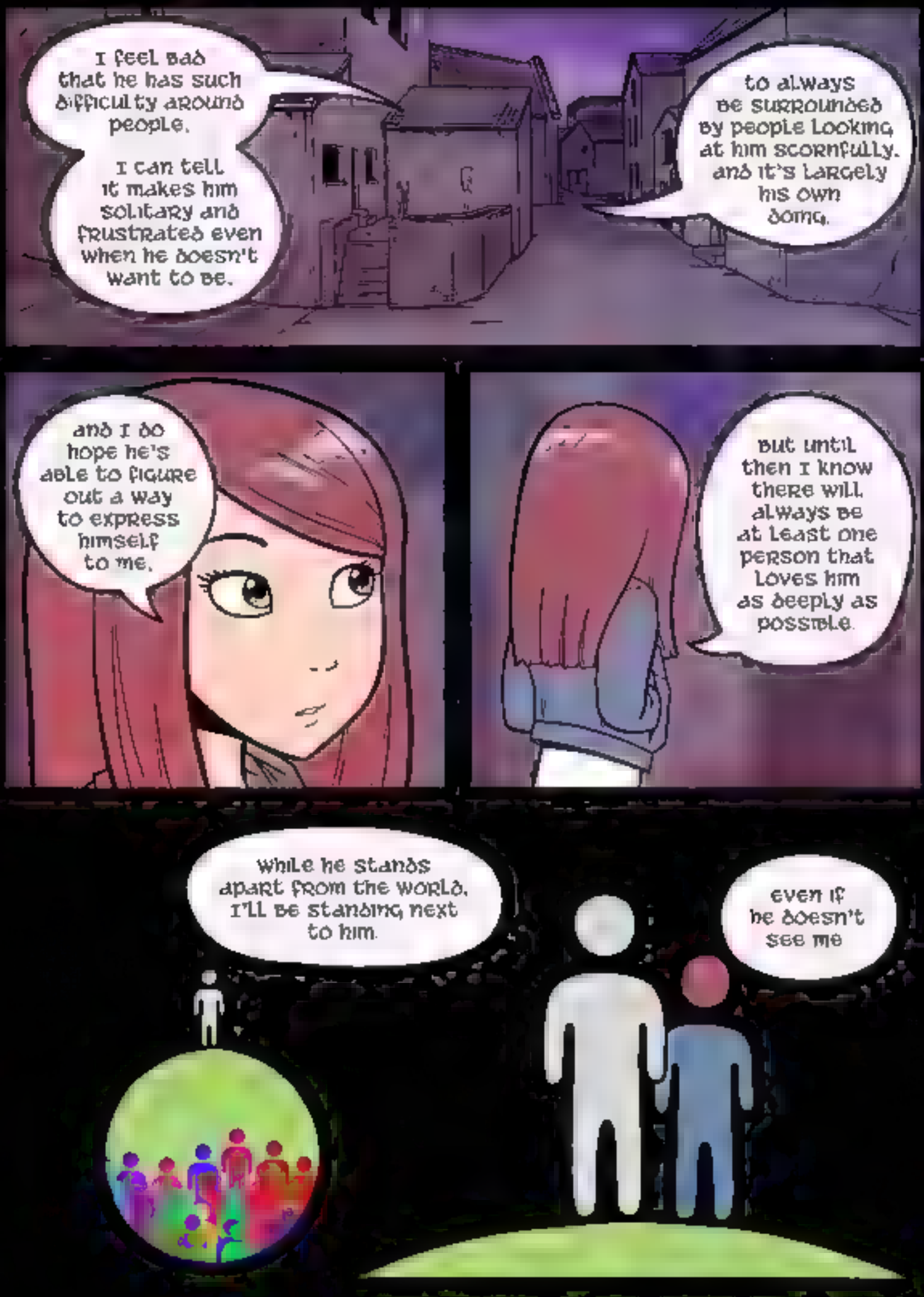

now that I'm one person again it seems that he's gone back to how he was before.
quiet and awkward.
I'll probably never experience that side of him again, so those memories are precious to me.
did you know he's even casual with Renard?
It's like he's only unable to talk to me specifically.
If I wanted, I could look through Renard's eyes and catch a glimpse of that side of my father, but it wouldn't be directed at me.
But after recombining I realised I don't have to do that
I was mistaken.
I didn't understand what I was seeing.

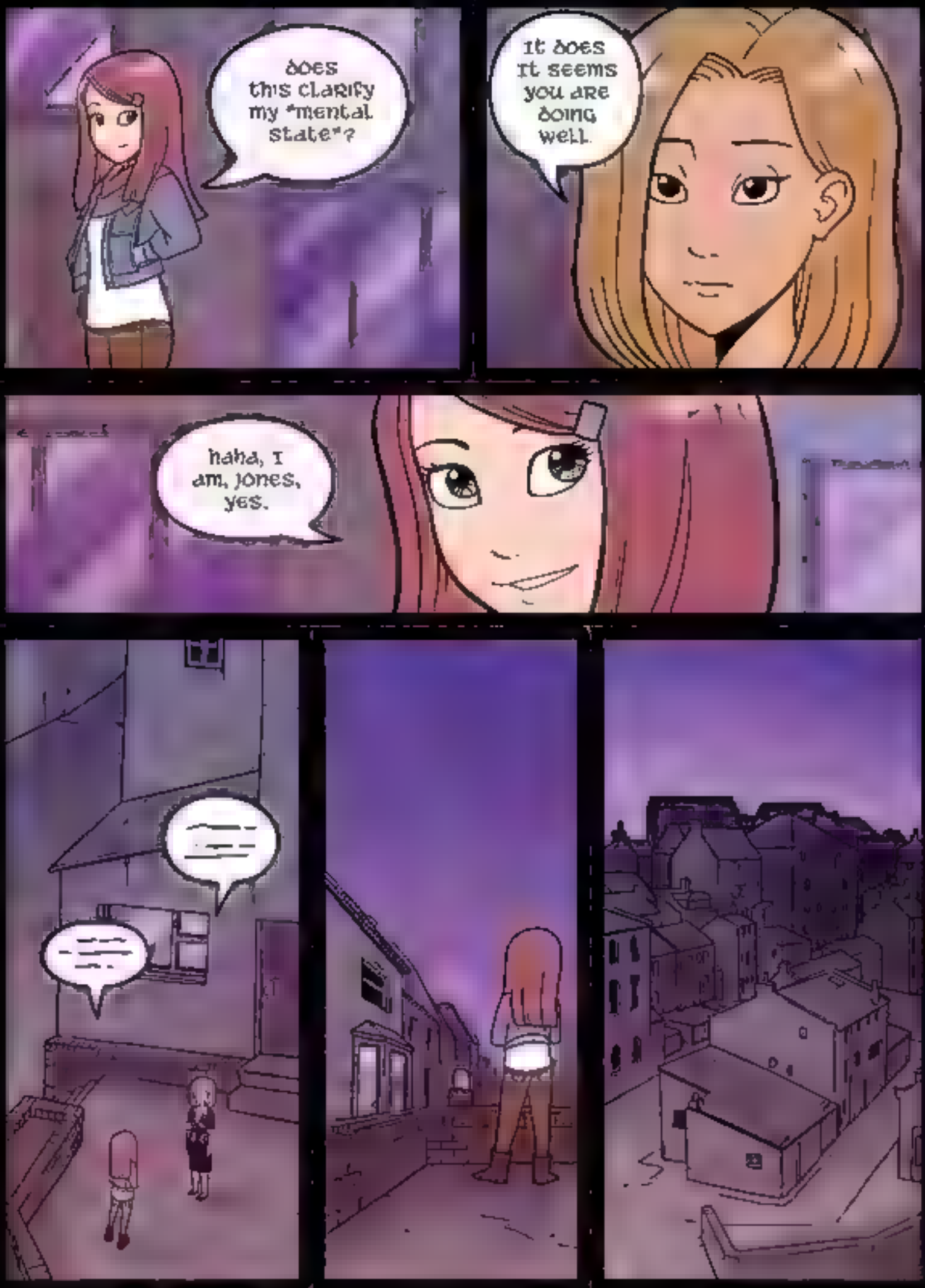

he wasn't hiding parts of himself
he isn't two different people depending on who he talks to.
it's all him.
that's him as a whole
there is no nicer part of him, or a meaner part of him. he is what he is
and that is the man my mother fell in love with.
she saw the whole of him, the good and, I suppose, the bad, and still loved him.


I suspect my father might not even realise this about himself
In fact, I know he wishes he could act differently towards me, like he does with others.
there was a time, when he first returned, when I blocked off a part of myself, the part that was angry with him.
I remember feeling like my physical body was numb.
distant
I think that's a little like how he feels.
But I had done that to myself, and I was able to undo it.
I think my father has no control over how he acts not even in his own mind.
I can tell he struggles with it.
and it explains some of his strange behaviour.
It doesn't excuse it just explains it


I know the way he acts makes people dislike him.
In fact, I know that everyone hates my father.
I know how badly they talk about him.
and I know that I do not care in the slightest.


I understand why they dislike him
sometimes, the way he acts makes even me hate him.
I know people are just concerned for me
so they can say what they want about him. I don't require anyone to like him.
but I will still love him.
I love him for who he is and what he is.
my father
my family.


I feel bad that he has such difficulty around people.
I can tell it makes him solitary and frustrated even when he doesn't want to be.
to always be surrounded by people looking at him scornfully. and it's largely his own doing.
and I do hope he's able to figure out a way to express himself to me.
but until then I know there will always be at least one person that loves him as deeply as possible.
While he stands apart from the world, I'll be standing next to him.
even if he doesn't see me

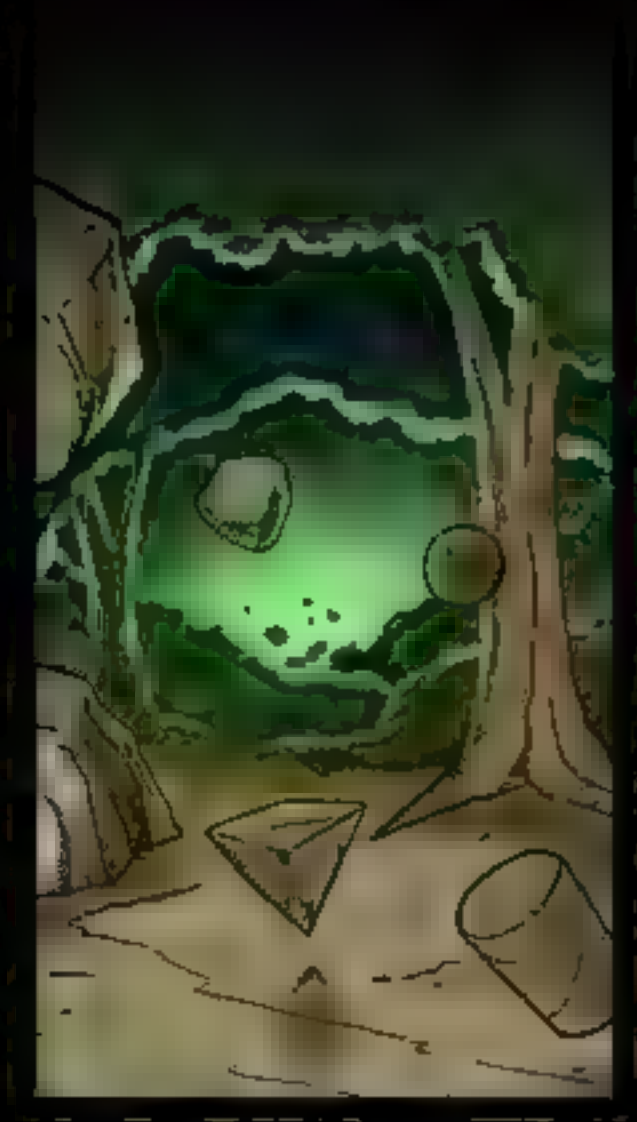

does this clarify my "mental state"?
it does it seems you are doing well.
haha, I am, jones, yes.


very well, thank you for your report, jones.
we can now continue.

Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 81

The Lake Water

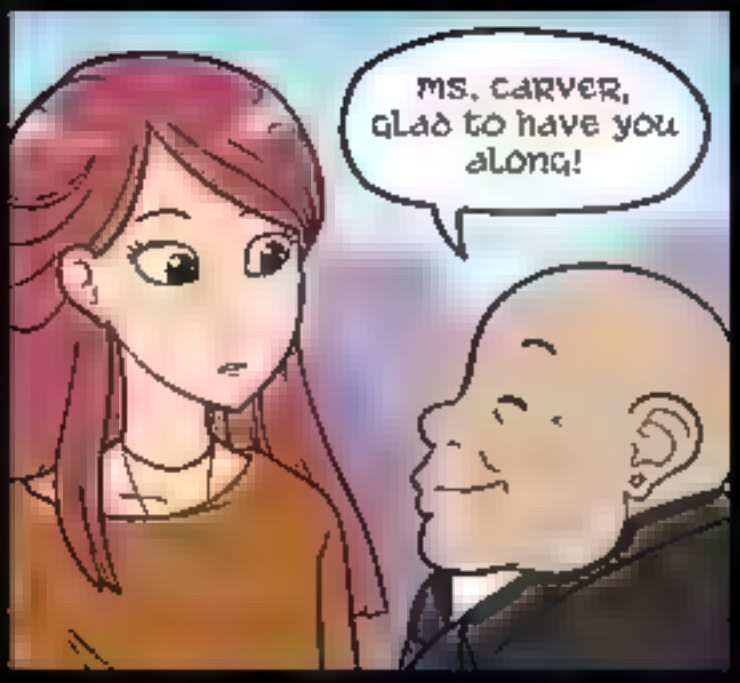





so, they're actually letting us go with them?
they know Loup probably wouldn't even let them in without you.
at least we have full backup this time, with all of you here!
that's right. just remember we're not looking for a fight, cvet
yes, yes, boring is how you like it.






MS. CARVER, GLAD TO HAVE YOU ALONG!


HERE IS THE ITEM TO PRESENT TO THE FOREST ENTITY.

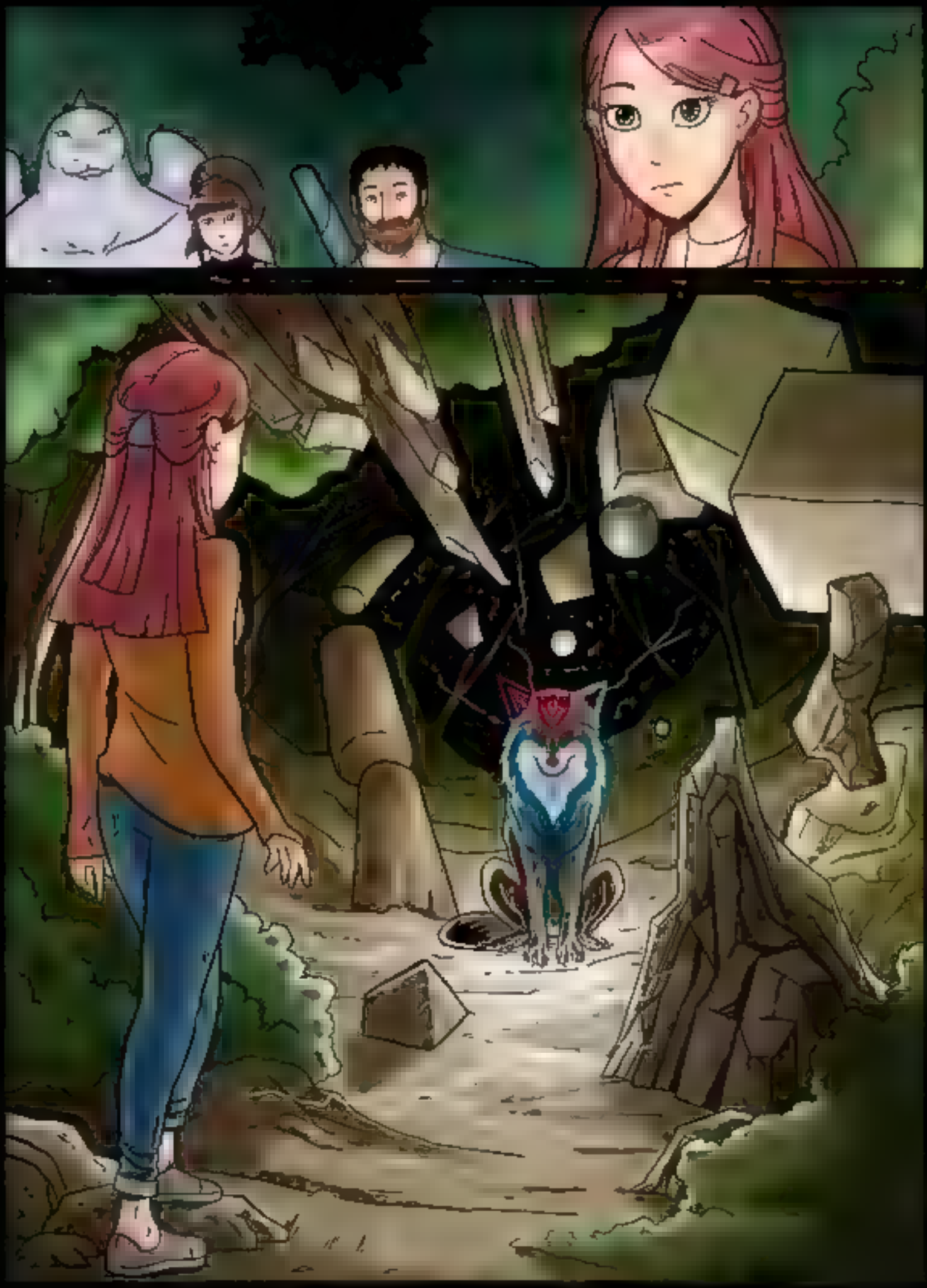

THA-
SIR EGLAMORE, WE ARE READY TO DEPART AT YOUR LEISURE.


UH LET'S GET GOING THEN


I'm sorry, annie, I'm not part of the forest mission, so I don't know what they might be up to...
umm, excuse me, but what is all this for?
readings.
well, you won't be able to take any machinery into the forest.
fine.


SIR... how much do you know about the shadow men?
heh, they're a pretty strange lot, yeah?
they're an autonomous group that pretty much only answer directly to the court.
their operations are kept secret, even from me.
I'm worried they might be up to something.
I agree, but everything they do is for the good of the court I'm sure the last thing they want is another attack from the forest
they promised to keep out of the way, but it'd be best to keep our eyes on them.






Loup.


finally, you have returned.
and it looks like you're getting things under control again
it takes a lot of concentration forgive me if ~
you...
you are one person again!
you dare reverse what I had done!?!


well you weren't going to help me, Loup, so I took matters into my own hands
insulting!
and you come to me with all these people!
in my forest!
you. you did this on purpose! to disrupt my thoughts!


Loup, I brought what you asked.
Will you at least calm down?
Why should I?!
Because you and I both know you aren't going to hurt me.


whatever coyote has planned for you, I'm part of it. you know that much at least.
every time we help you, you respond with anger and misery! think of the poor tree elves you cast out of the forest!
even the court has been kinder to them than you have.
are you... trying to guilt me?!
you think I'd be cowed because you bring up the insignificant lives I've affected?


Let's say I keep you alive...
does that extend to the people you surround yourself with?
I - I had no choice in them coming!
then this will not be your fault!
Loup!


CHOMP
HAK
HA
HA
now.


ZAP
KLE


KRKK
ah! they almost got it!


hmm-hm-hmm
hehe!
hehe, what a fool, Loup, what a fool!
c-coyote?


fire head girl! i'm disappointed you brought other people into the forest with you!
did you not feel safe here?
coyote... loup has done the opposite of make me feel safe.
hahaha!
what's going on?
look, the court is trying to steal my powers!
this is not the first time!


you remember when renard was held captive by the court? that was an attempt as well.
yes, yes. I gave him a fraction of my power and the court wanted it for themselves.
wh-when he took that man's body?
now it looks like they mean to take all of it...
but... renard did what he did because...
[illegible] yes. your mother was tasked with tricking renard, and this lead to the death of that man.
but you see this man here? that attempt was partly his design.


be careful of this one, fire head girl. his bitterness knows no bounds!
speak for yourself, creature
oho! you reach through to this realm?
I know a few tricks. however distasteful they are to me.
carver. you converse with coyote in this manner? it seems you have kept from us that he is still alive.
oh, no, failed cousin, I am very much dead, hehe!
I appear here only as a flash of memory! but I suspect you already knew this.


and this was your play, was it?
you still wallow in your miserable schemes?
the court is a collection of cowards, and you need my power to accomplish your cowardly designs.
cowards, you say?
what we create will benefit all of man.
we will rid ourselves of the shackles of the unseen world.
we will
fine, fine. but what I have to say is not for you.
just know this. when I return fire head girl and slip back to my deathly sleep, loup will attack you in rage, and it is all your fault!
now leave us.
POF


who is that man, really?
ah, a beautiful failure, I'm afraid.
but enough of that, it is time I whisper more secrets to you!
why do you keep so many things hidden from Loup like this, coyote?
it was for his own benefit, and mine, that I keep my real designs from him!
how was it beneficial for you to die?
hehe, well that is where you come in!
when Loup absorbs the memories hidden in the lake water he will know about the tooth I gave you.
he will learn that I mean for you to kill him with it!


what?!
It is the final step of my plan.
you cannot simply return it to him, he must be killed with it!
but... but .. why me?
who better a steward of death than a guide of death? haha!
when you use the tooth to pierce Loup's heart, you will be truly killing him, myself and ysengrin.
when it is done you will know what to do, but not how to do it.
I leave that all in your hands.


oh, coyote . how can you ask me to do something like that?
alas, I cannot!
I call the court coward, but it is my own cowardice that drives me to this!
I love you too much to ask you to do something I know will tear at your soul...
so I'm having Loup force your hand.


his next actions will leave you with little choice!
but I notice a much larger strength in you. I know you will be fine, in the end.
see you one last time, fire head girl!
coyote!
BOOM


Pop
Pop
Pop


aata! What did you do?!
He He He!










PANG
Carver...
I-I'm okay.
I think I can hold him back.
help the others!
Nod
Hr


aata!
no! you
can't!
you'll be
kicked out of
the program...
in my failure,
I prove myself
correct...


aata!
Is she hurt?
She will be fine.
then get your people out of here!

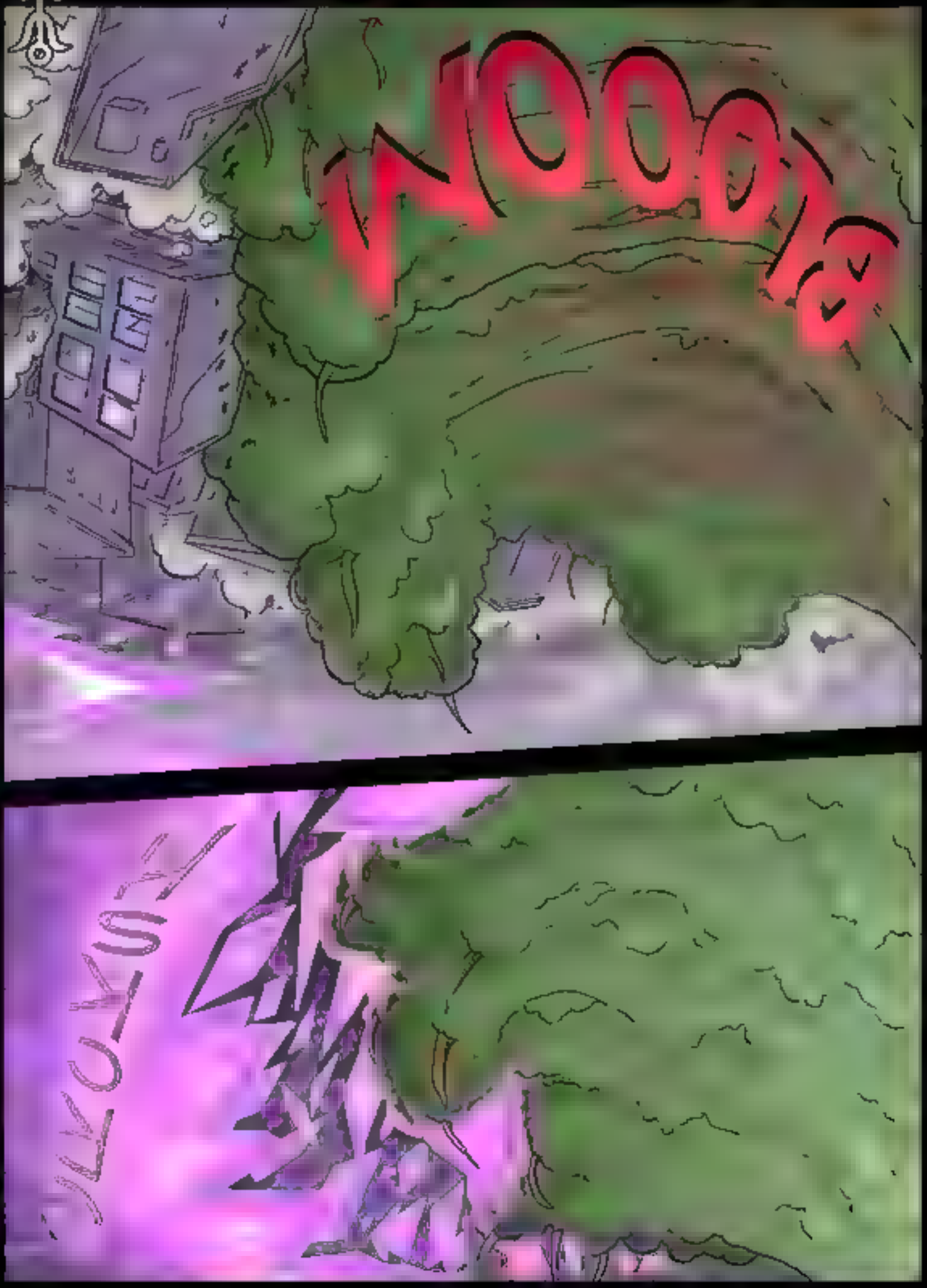



CARVER!






CHAK
CRK


WOOF!
CLUNK

Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 82:

The Forest Released


ugh...
cough cough


THUD
THUD
THUD
THUD


CRACK
THUD
MR. EGLAMORE! PARLEY!
CARVER! thank GOD. .
annie!
the forest... loup must have lost control of it!
I don't know...
something coyote told him made him attack, I think.


I spoke to coyote the instant before this happened
you did?
that man, aata, was there too. coyote said this attack is his fault.
I'll say.
if I find him and he's still alive, he's got some serious questions to answer.
do you know anything about him, sir? does he have some sort of power?
he's just a normal man as far as I know.
the shadow men don't meddle with the supernatural at all, usually
you see what happens when they do...


parley think you can teleport us out of here?
I can, yeah, but I'll never find evet or any other survivors without andrew.
I can contact renard and let him know what happened.
okay, we should get a view of the outside and then head back to the court.
in the meantime~
wait... do you hear that?
KRK
SKRITCH
SKRITCH
GRUMBLE
oof!


cripes!
humans!
wait! wait!
you!
the fire girl from the court!
hooray! we found help!
we got a lot of others in the tunnels below!
tunnels?

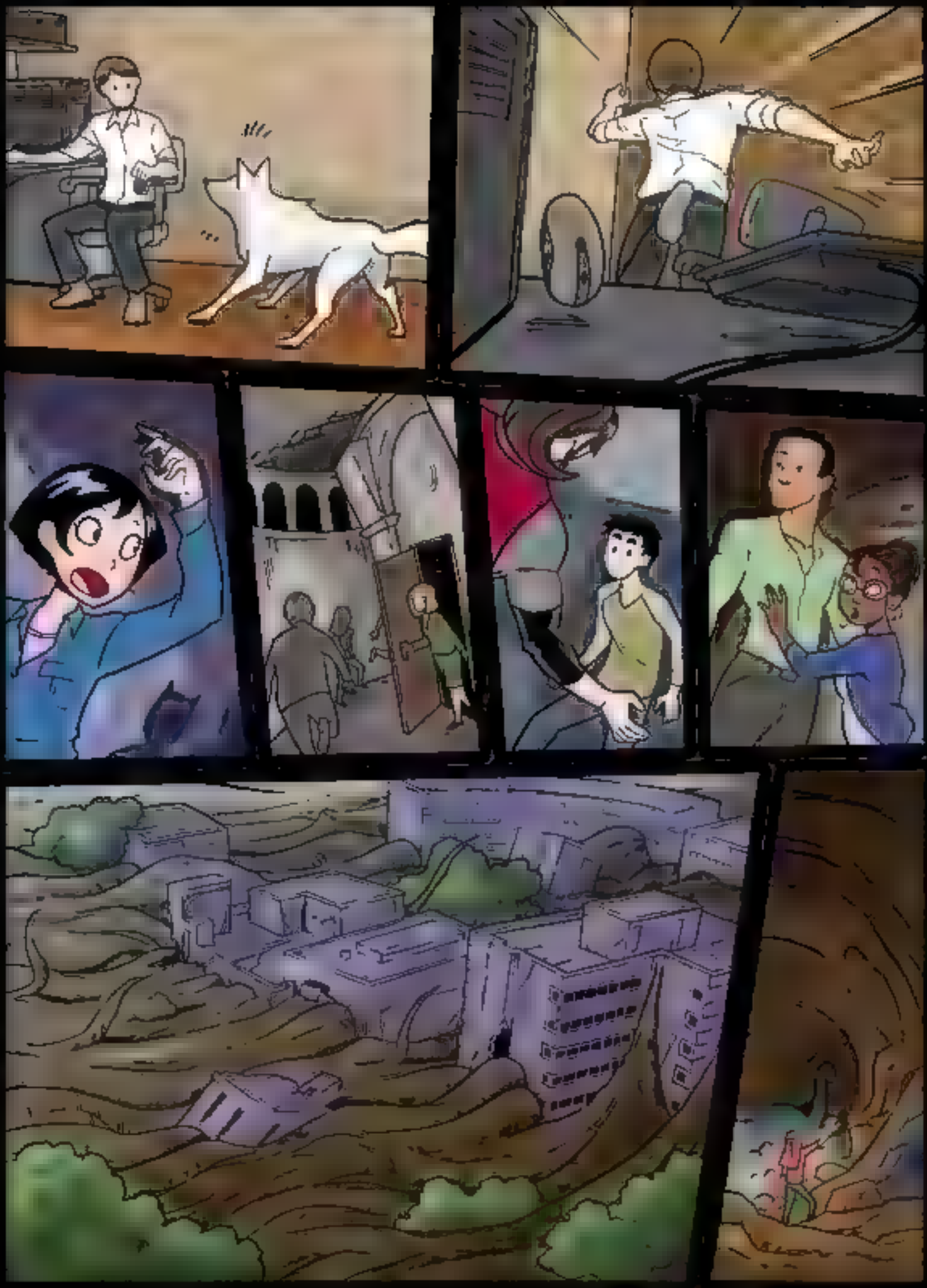

come on!
SIR....
If Loup really did let go of the forest, all the creatures that live there could need help too....
I'd understand if you need to get back to the court, but...
It's okay. You're still their medium.
and we're your backup, remember.
thank you.


heeey!
we're back!
oooooooo!


ah! medium!
hello!
the medium!
I'm so happy to see you all!
is anyone hurt?
yeesh... there's too many here for me to teleport
even multiple trips would take a really long time.
what the...


this... this is the old registration building!
It can't be!
that would mean the forest breached the court [illegible]!
CARVER!
we have to get out of here and see how much damage there was!
we're in the court?
the court?! oh no!
I can't leave everyone here! they're scared enough as it is!
you go ahead. parley can find me later.
CARVER, are you sure?
I am


okay, just... be careful.
Bip
Renard.
antimony!
what's going on? there's some sort of alert in progress!
Loup broke through the court barrier and let go of the forest he's gone completely crazy
are you hurt?
just a little scuffed up.
I'm with a large group of forest creatures
I'll tell your father
we're coming to get you!




CRUMBLE
cvet!
ah, annie!
you have collected a few travellers, I see, haha!
they're inhabitants of the forest. I want to help them get out of here!
is parley here also?
she and eglamore went to inform the court.
are you alone?
hehe, no no.
you see much drama unfolds behind me!


you!
all this is your fault!
hey, back off!
you realise Loup broke through the robots' barrier, right?
we're under the court right now!
what?!
oh, that's not a surprise.
we always knew the robot shield would never withstand a direct attack from coyote.


how would you know that?
we were the ones that installed the shielding protocol in the robots over the years.
it's old technology now, but at least it helped a little.
aata... should you be telling her all this?
what's the harm? nothing can be done about it now.
the robots failed.
they're just useless machines.


you were trying to take coyote's power, weren't you?
don't try to deny it!
I don't deny it.
we were trying to take his power, yes.
aata!
secrecy is of little use now, shell. I will be excluded for my actions.
you should remain with the rest of the shadow men. there is still hope for you.
PLOP
it should have worked.
indeed.


what should have worked?
why would you think it was a good idea to steal coyote's power?
BIP
hey!
parley! andrew!
wow, are you guys okay?
ah, sestra!
it's a real mess out there
we've got people digging to get you guys out, but I can take some of you in the meantime.
even the elves are helping out. the damage almost reached all the way to them!
your dad's pretty much organising everything! he's been non-stop since he heard the news
oh!


well, I should face the music.
oh, you.
eglamore wants to see you, he's pretty steamed
shell, could you stay here and help with the rescue?
I must advise on the next steps of the plan.
you're still going to help them?!
I may be excised from the program, but I'm still honour bound to see it through to the end.
If I fail at this, too, then everything will have been meanmgless.
aww, don't be so sad, pretty man!


so this is all your fault, right?
well you should be happy!
you got rid of loup!
what do you mean?
can't you tell? loup's gone!
we can't feel his presence anywhere!
he must be hiding in the court like the rest of us!
either way, cheer up!
don't make your wife sad!
thank you, child.


ms. parley, will you be able to take myself and the other shadow men at once?
yeah sure. let's go.
BIP
you seem to like that man a lot.
what are you talking about?
oh she does!
I notice this before, too!
she follow him like little kitten.
y-you!
I just respect him!
he's a great man!
he saved my life!


If he saved your life, why was he so upset about it?
you don't get it.
he... he gave up everything, threw it all away, just because I was too shocked to get out of the way
that doesn't make sense.
he's not supposed to use m-magic and stuff like that ..
he... *sniff*
he's tried so hard.
okay, okay, why don't we try to calm down a little.
cvet, can you check on the forest creatures?
maybe gather some of the stronger ones to help us dig upwards while we wait
ja


Look, I'm sure you were just... following orders or something, but you can't have expected this to end well.
It should have! We had the read outs, the numbers were good!
Omega said...
Omega?
Uh...
I uh, don't think I should say anything...
What a surprise
But it can't be a bad thing that Aata saved your life
It's probably because you mean more to him than the plan does, whatever it is.
You can't be upset about that.
Let's get to work.


BIP
hello? anime?
up here!
how's it going?
great, great, we're not far.
CRMBL SCRAPE
in fact...

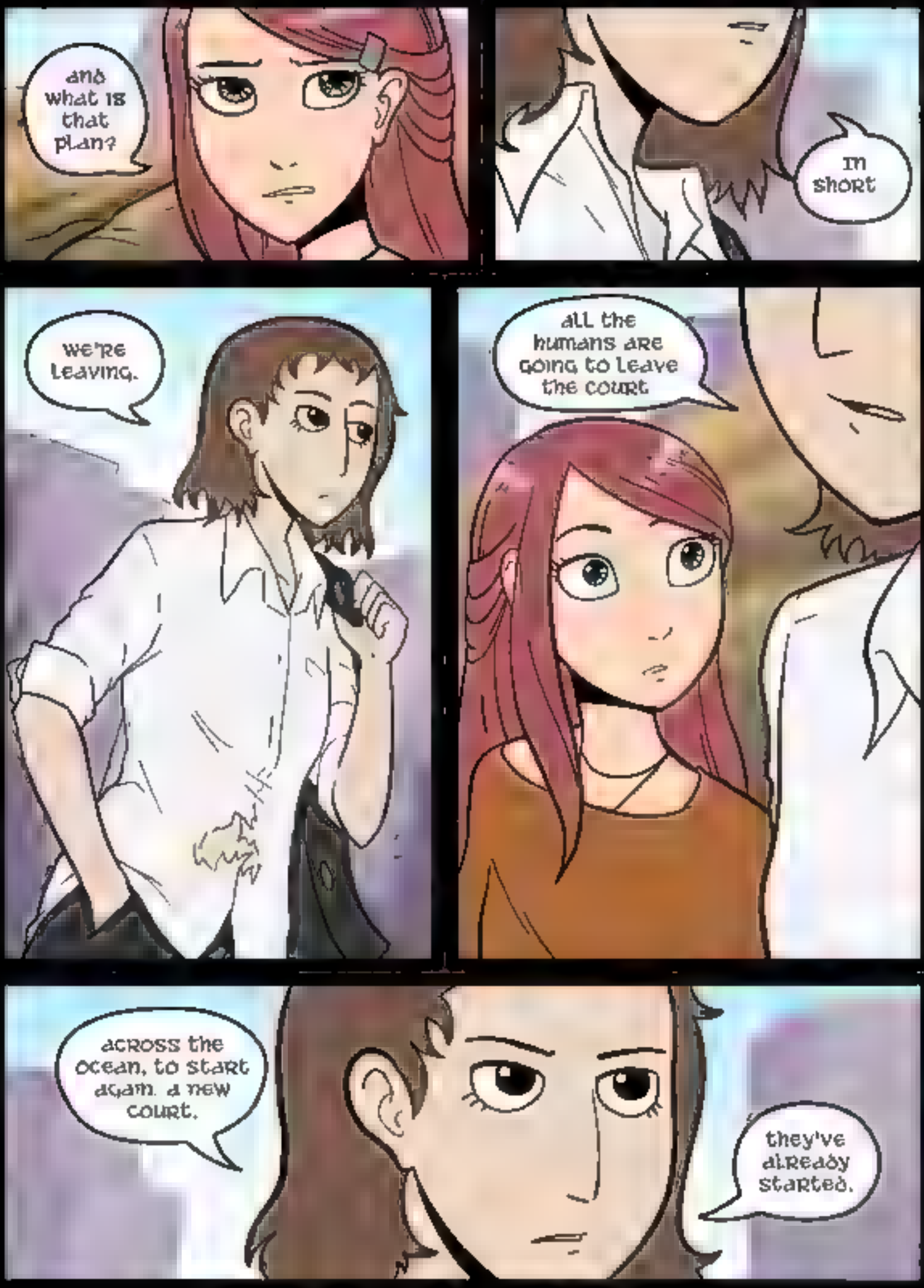



I'm so happy you're safe, annie!
but the shield robots they've all been buried...
arthur and juliette are so upset


were they destroyed?
we don't know, you and the forest animals were okay
all this .. stuff . the forest, the material seems pretty soft It's not wood, or stone, but kind of mixture
I'm going to analyse a sample of it.
renard, I think we have to be careful.
loup is hiding in the court now, and you have the last of coyote's gifts
his ability to take someone's body and..
...
he knows about the coyote tooth.
I think he's going to be coming for you.


hmm.
do we tell eglamore and the court about this?
I'm reluctant to tell them after all this... but we may have to.
coyote told me I have to kill loup with the tooth myself.
what m blazes !
oh excuse me
are you okay, um .. shell?
yeah. yeah
I have to find data.


whatever he does next, I'm sticking with him.
then you're leaving the shadow men?
if he does, yeah
and... I've been thinking.
I trust aata, and I know he trusts me
so... he might have left me with you to talk I dunno.
about what?
we messed up big time today but you seem to be able to handle loup.
better than we can, anyway.
the court is going to move on with their plan despite all this mess.

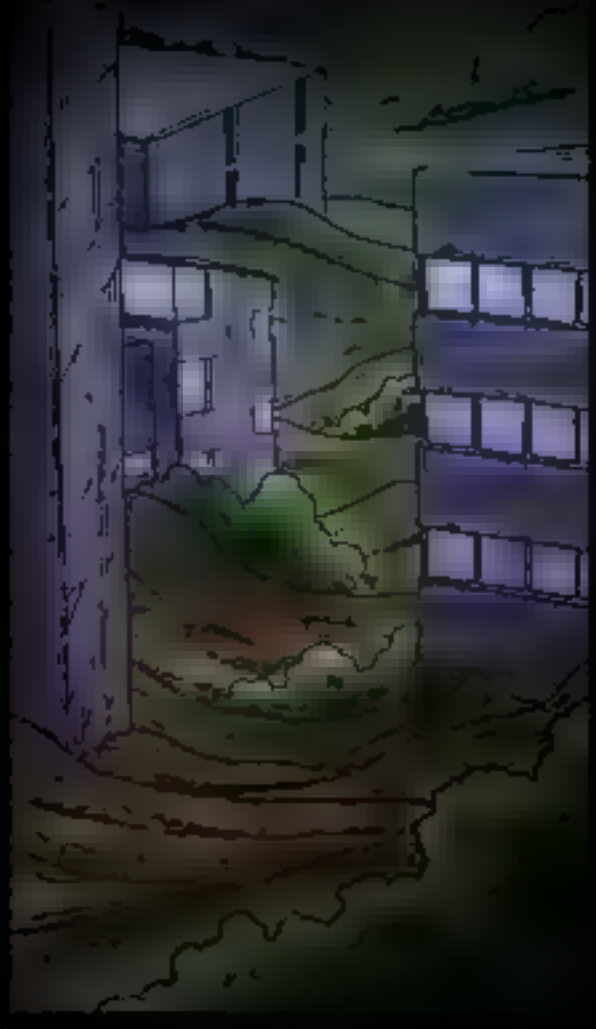

and what is that plan?
in short
we're leaving.
all the humans are going to leave the court
across the ocean, to start again. a new court.
they've already started.


Why would you need coyote's power to do that?
Because it's a huge source of ether.
And if they can't get a hold of him, they're going to find an equivalent power somewhere else
no matter the cost

Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 83:

Uncovering



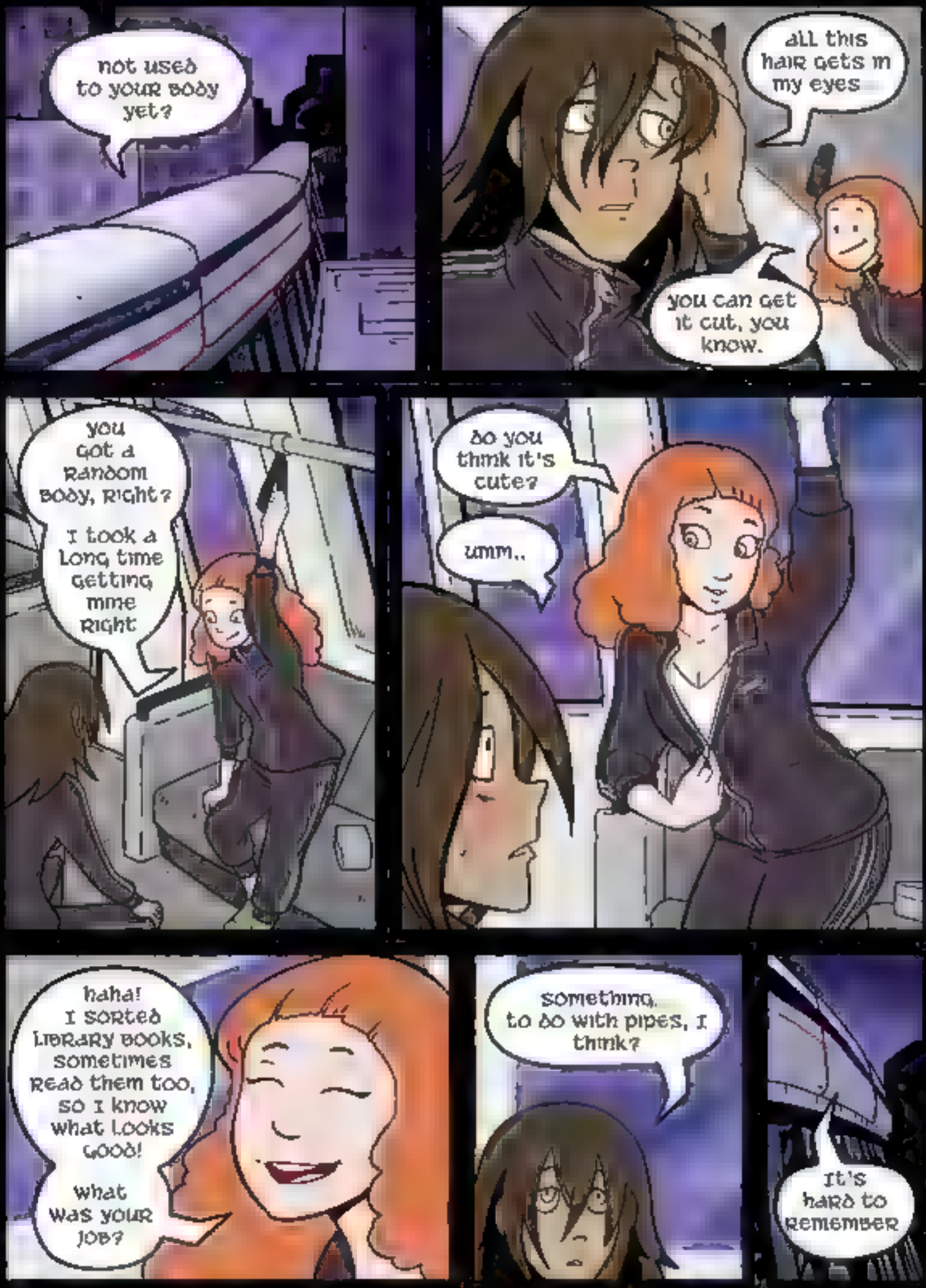



ahh!


do not worry this creature is a recent transient from the forest.
designation: dover demon
d-demon?
it is not frightened of you because it knows you are not human. ignore it
nor are we robot, seraph.
we are new people.
maybe you can earn the privilege too, if you hadn't angered the angel.
...


don't mind him. the seraph models can't help but feel they have to oversee everything.
look, we're almost there!
two of them!


excellent both in good condition.
um, yes. okay.
can you take these to the angel right away?
we'll both go, okay?


not used to your body yet?
all this hair gets in my eyes
you can get it cut, you know.
you got a random body, right?
I took a long time getting mine right
so you think it's cute?
umm..
haha! I sorted library books, sometimes read them too, so I know what looks good!
what was your job?
something to do with pipes, I think?
It's hard to remember

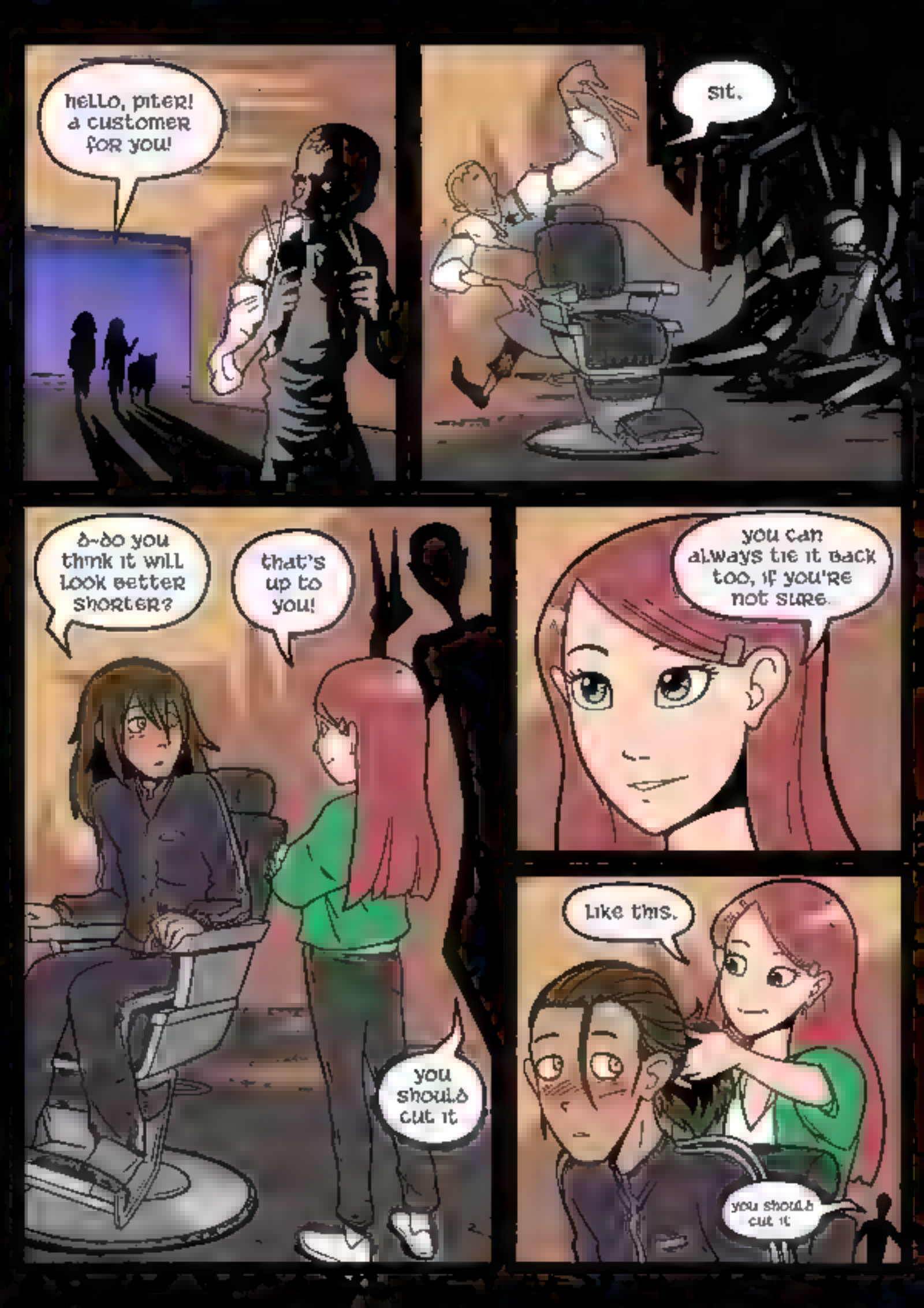

Look, there she is!
She's working late tonight!


ROBOT!
hello you two. did you find more?
yeah! two of them!
thank you for your hard work. there is much to be done but this little step helps us on our path.
now, you must get some rest. you have been out there for days.
be sure not to neglect your new bodies.
get something to eat.


Why do you think Robot doesn't have a new body yet?
I dunno!
Did you know he's technically a seraph?
Oh, really?
yeah, he wasn't affected by the shield order, so he and the angel got to work bringing us back...


annie! hey, annie!
over here!
Lana! nice to see you!
busy night!
yeah. we dug up two more!
wonderful. and is this your friend?
um... jerrek.
there are so many of you now! how are you finding your new body?
um the hair gets in my eyes. .
I think it looks nice.


Why don't you take him to piter?
Oh, yes! he used to be a barber robot
I can take you to him before I have to see some guests
Uh, um... okay.

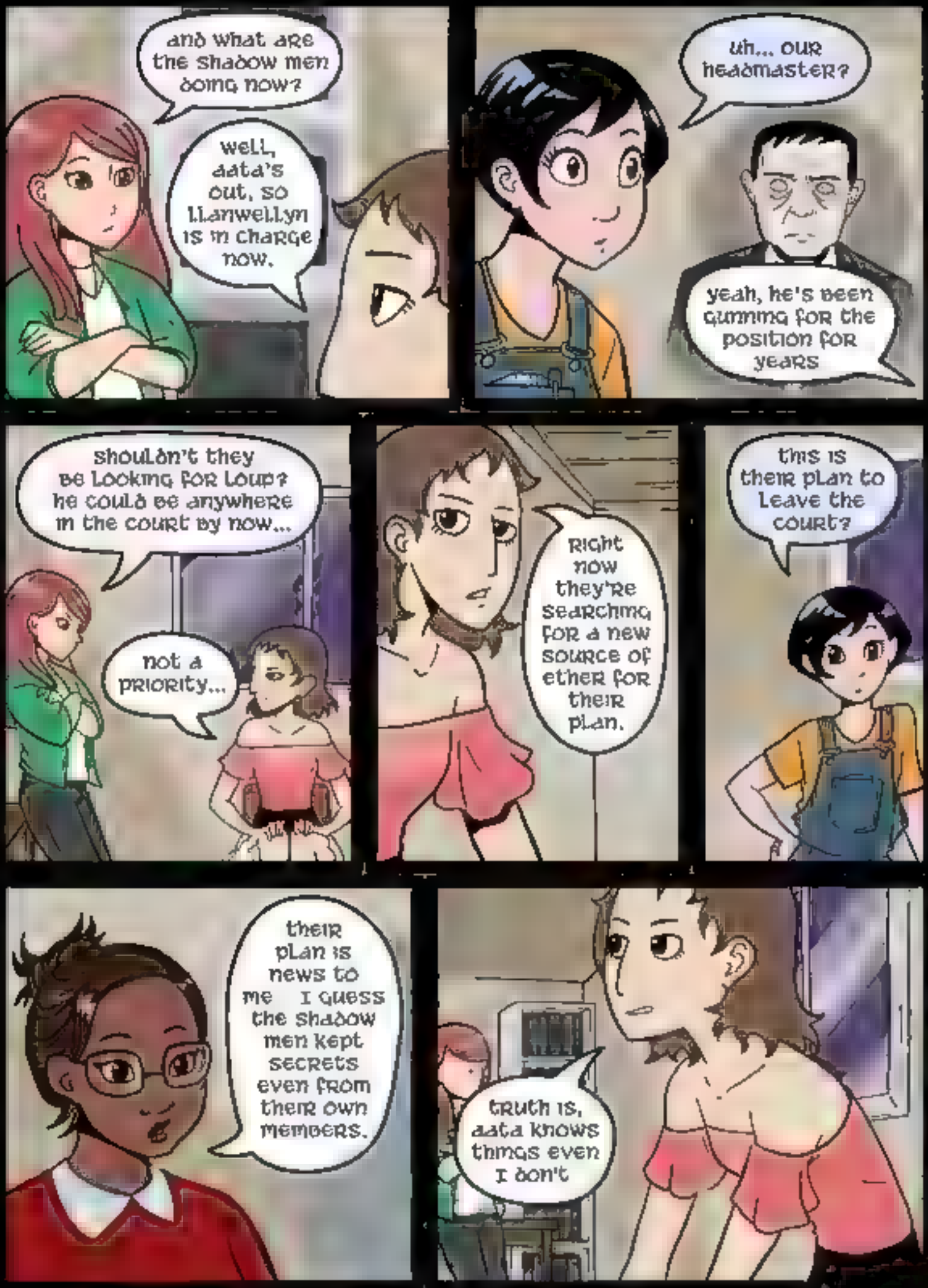

hello, piter! a customer for you!
sit.
s-so you think it will look better shorter?
that's up to you!
you can always tie it back too, if you're not sure.
like this.
you should cut it
you should cut it

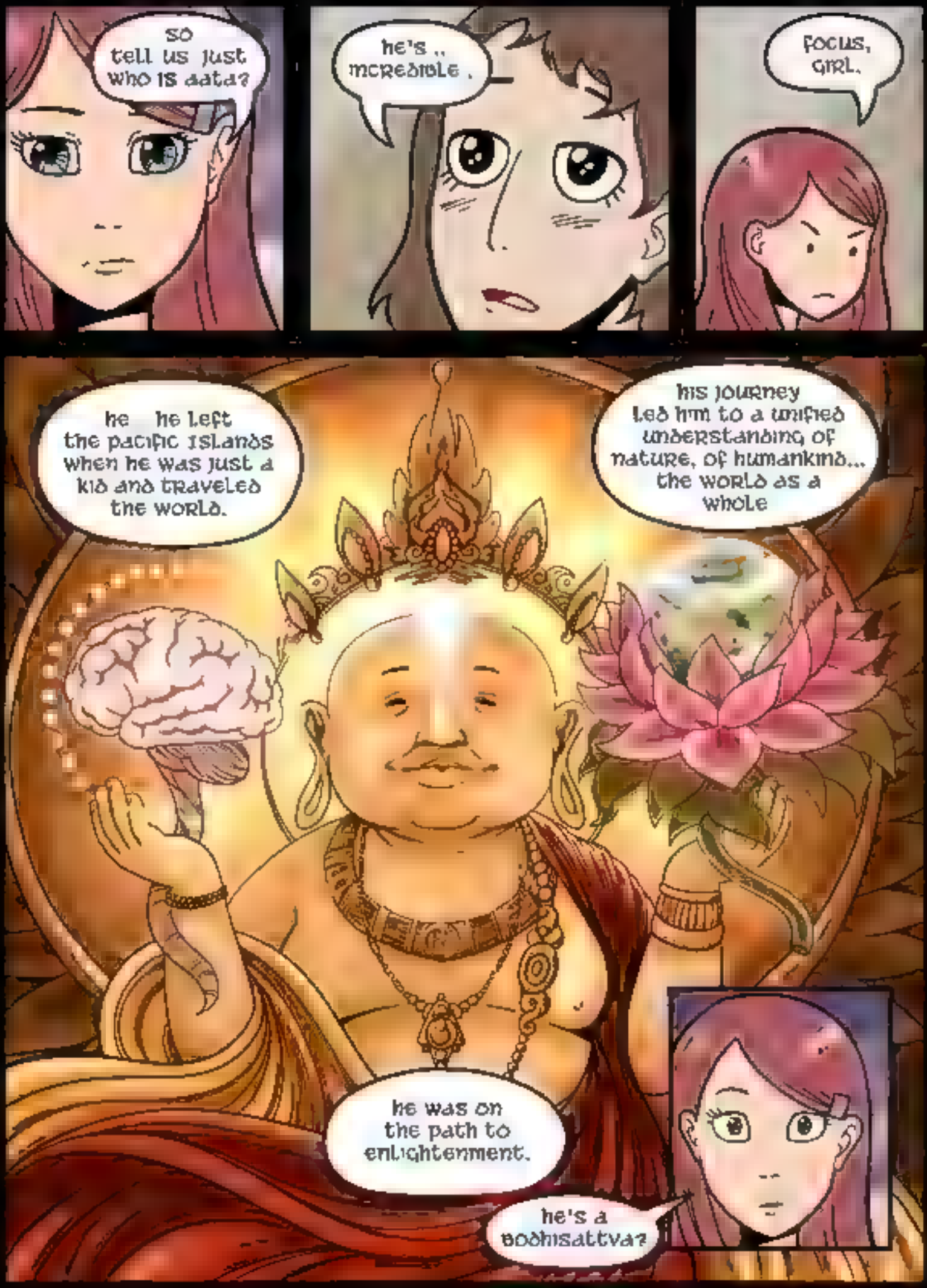

oh, I should really be going.
nice to meet you, JERREK!
nice to m-meet you too...
I think you have a fan
shush, you!

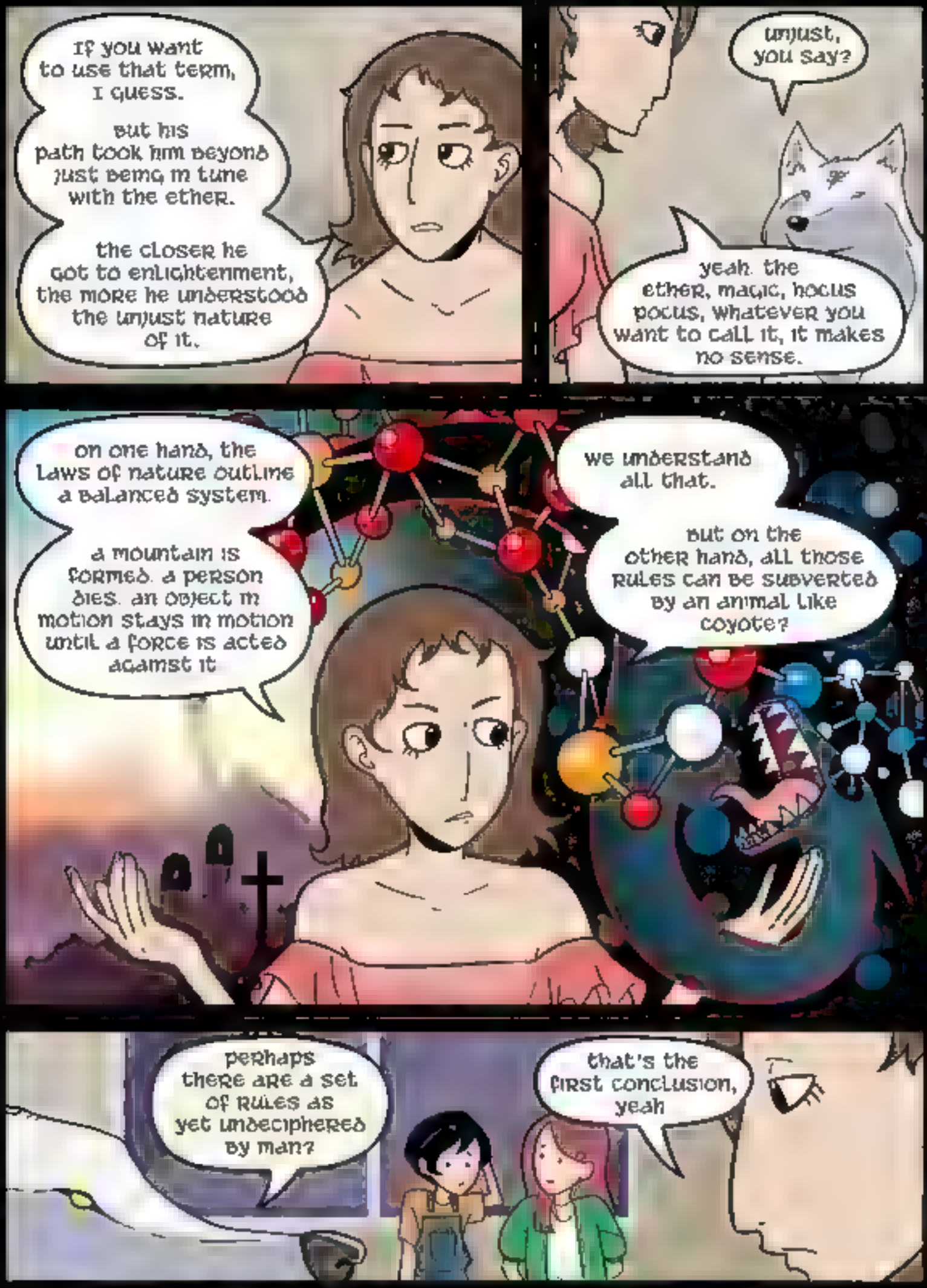

heck
is going on here?!
what
the
who are all these people?!
shell!
you umm look nice...
thank you, I love this dress


MORRIS! YOU'RE IN ON ALL THIS?
IT'S NOT JUST ME, AZ.
GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, ARIZONA.
..
ARTHUR?!
ARIZONA?

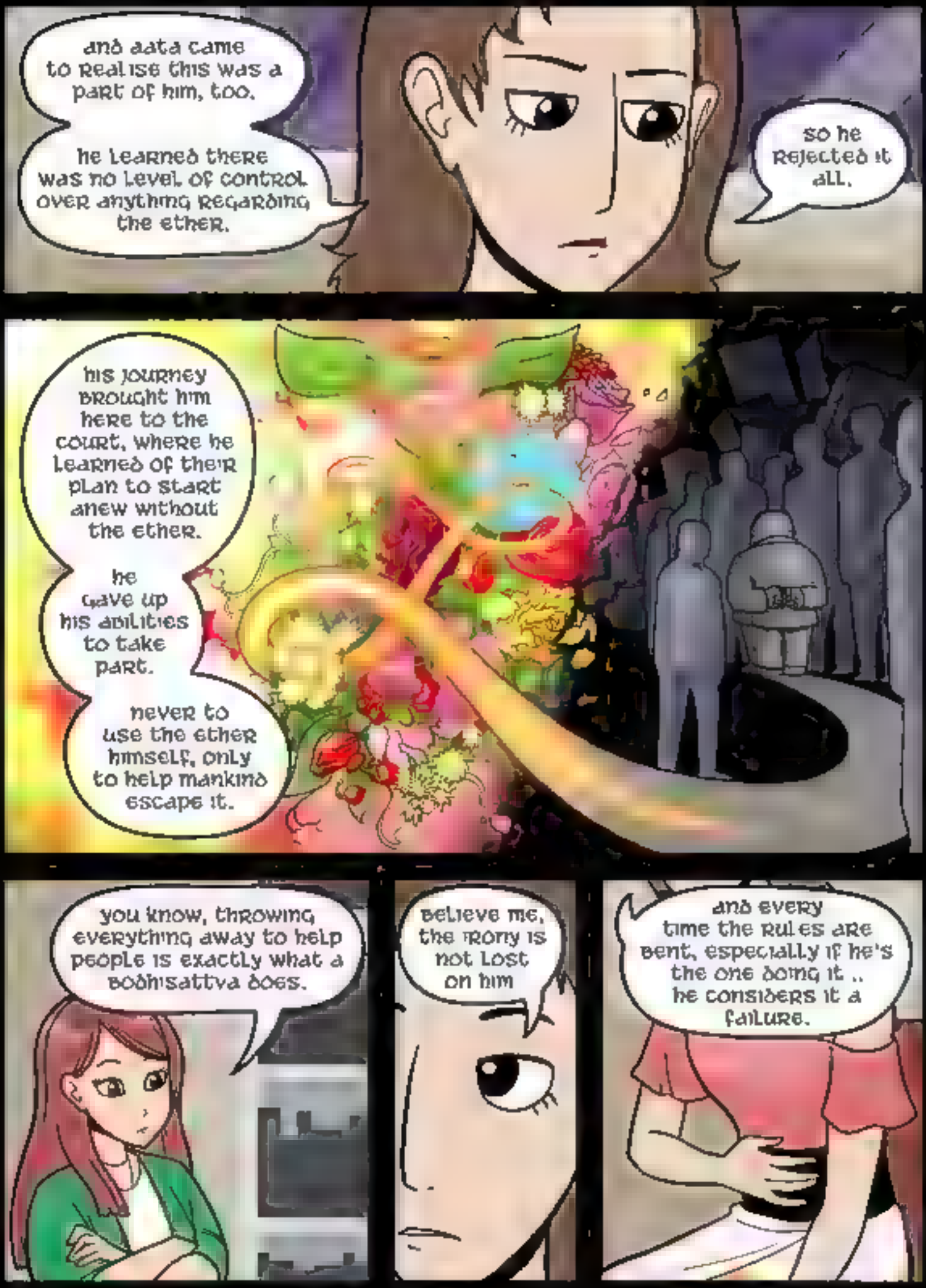

ohhh, man.. thank God Aata isn't here...
the less he knows about all this, the better.
what is he doing now? was he really kicked out of the shadow men?
he was, yeah. so I left, too.
Right I'm going to leave too!
Juliette, it might be best to stay in their ranks for now.
It's thanks to your resources we've been able to keep our operation hidden.
hmm...

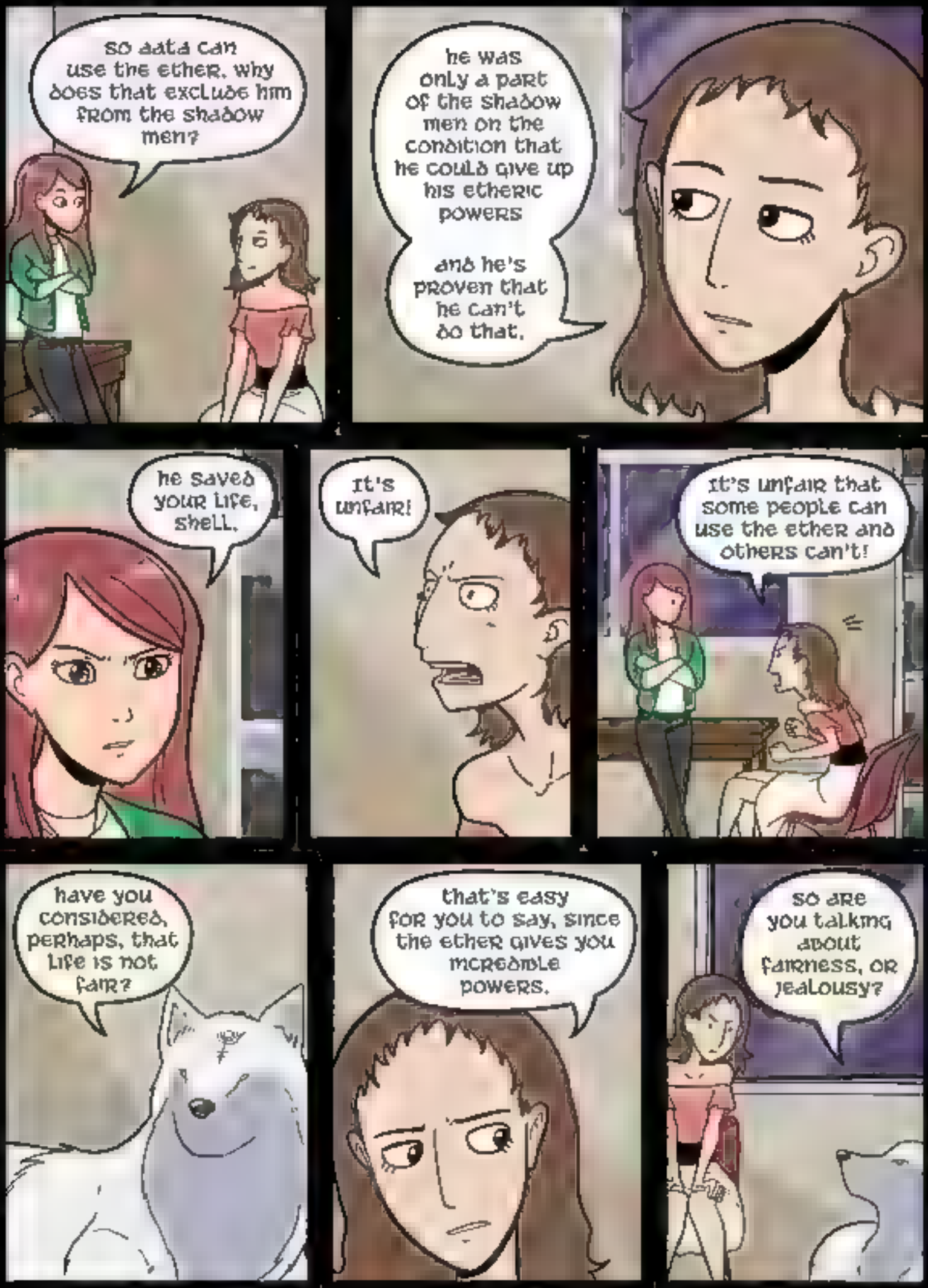

and what are the shadow men doing now?
well, aata's out, so llanwellyn is in charge now.
uh... our headmaster?
yeah, he's been gunning for the position for years
shouldn't they be looking for loup? he could be anywhere in the court by now...
not a priority...
right now they're searching for a new source of ether for their plan.
this is their plan to leave the court?
their plan is news to me I guess the shadow men kept secrets even from their own members.
truth is, aata knows things even I don't

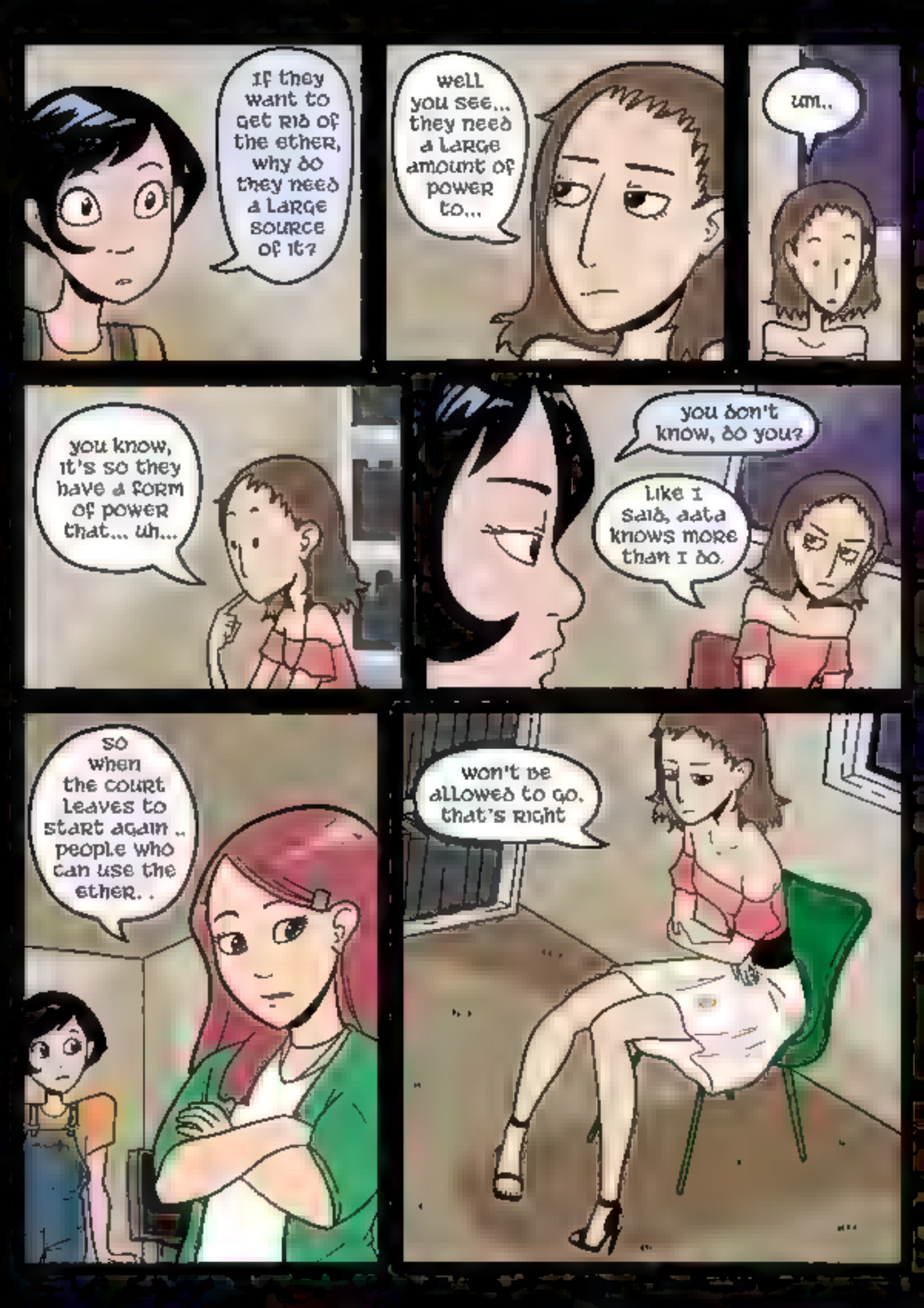

so tell us just who is aata?
he's .. incredible .
focus, girl.
he he left the pacific islands when he was just a kid and traveled the world.
his journey led him to a unified understanding of nature, of humankind... the world as a whole
he was on the path to enlightenment.
he's a bodhisattva?

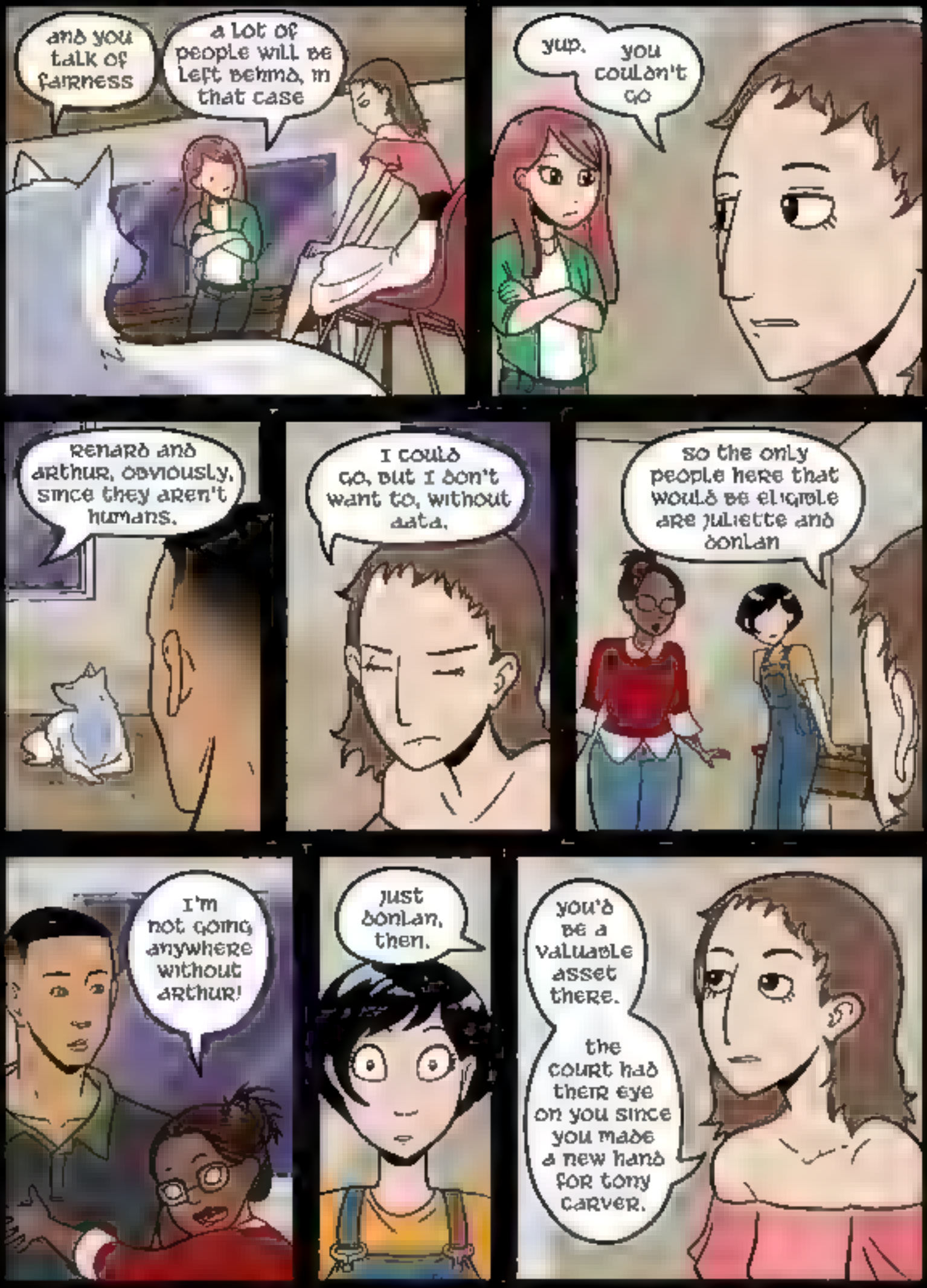

If you want to use that term, I guess.
But his path took him beyond just being in tune with the ether.
The closer he got to enlightenment, the more he understood the unjust nature of it.
unjust, you say?
yeah. the ether, magic, hocus pocus, whatever you want to call it, it makes no sense.
on one hand, the laws of nature outline a balanced system.
a mountain is formed. a person dies. an object in motion stays in motion until a force is acted against it
we understand all that.
but on the other hand, all those rules can be subverted by an animal like coyote?
perhaps there are a set of rules as yet undeciphered by man?
that's the first conclusion, yeah

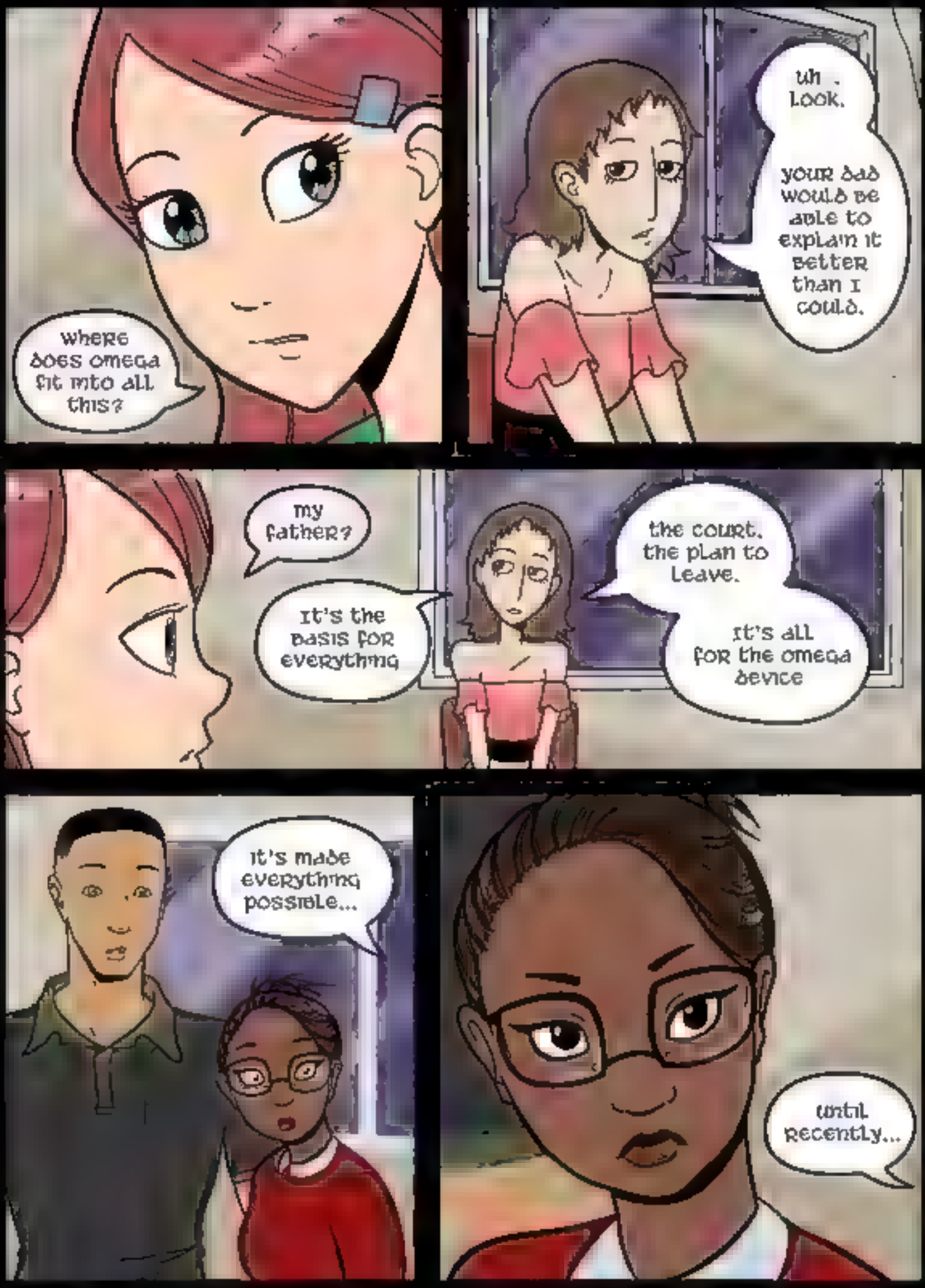

ARTHUR this new body of yours... it's an advanced machine, right?
well... that's putting it simply
I have to put it simply because I can't even begin to understand how it works.
but you do, right? you know it's the result of solid, tested engineering
sure...
but you, renard, you remember the court kept you locked up for years? studying you?
I remember.
and you know what they found?
nothing.
no conceivable explanation for your being, your nature, your power.
CONCLUSION
beyond the ether, something that can be measured and extracted, there was no explanation for your existence, or that of any other etheric creature


and aata came to realise this was a part of him, too.
he learned there was no level of control over anything regarding the ether.
so he rejected it all.
his journey brought him here to the court, where he learned of their plan to start anew without the ether.
he gave up his abilities to take part.
never to use the ether himself, only to help mankind escape it.
you know, throwing everything away to help people is exactly what a bodhisattva does.
believe me, the irony is not lost on him
and every time the rules are bent, especially if he's the one doing it .. he considers it a failure.

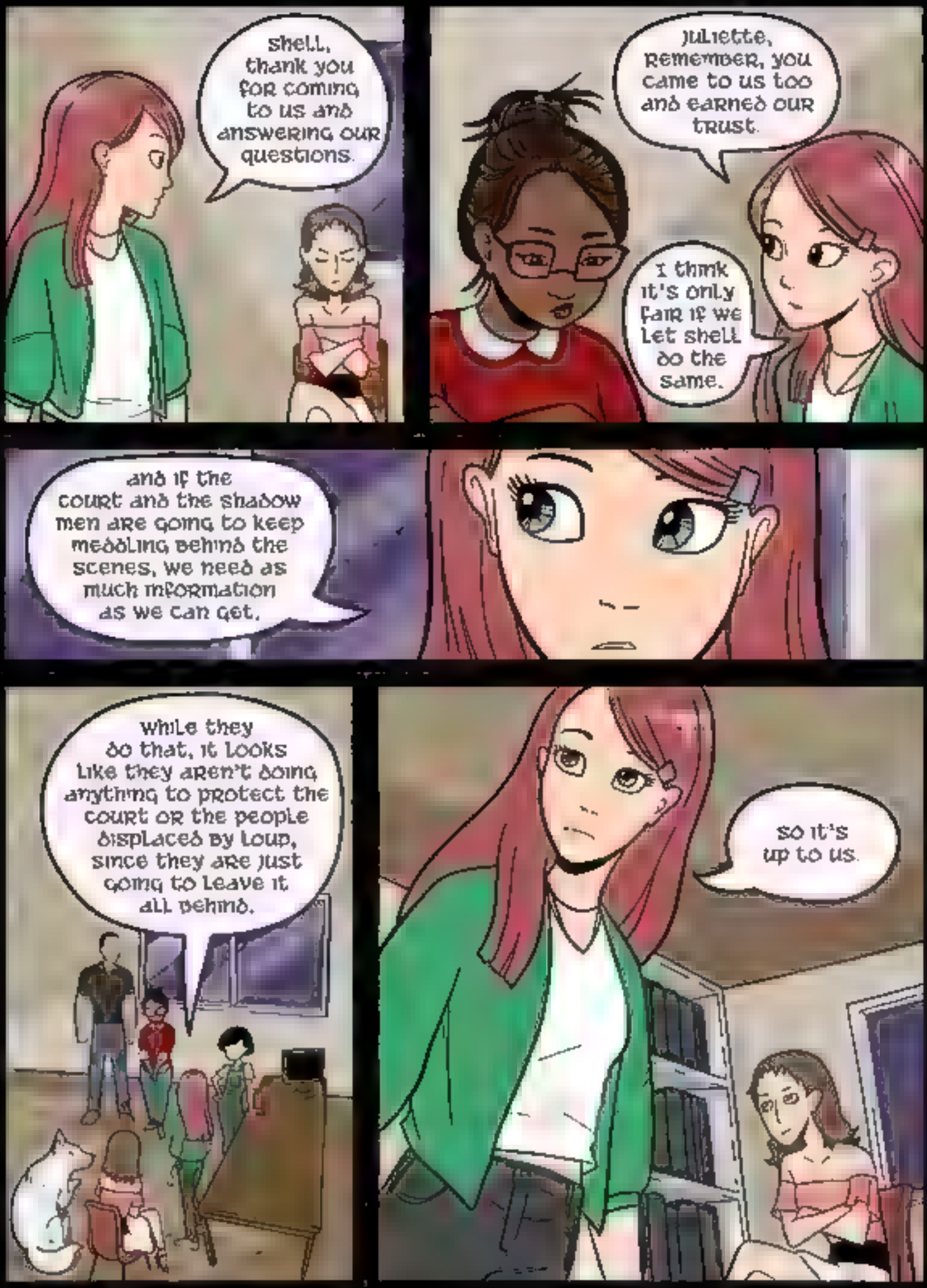

so aata can use the ether. why does that exclude him from the shadow men?
he was only a part of the shadow men on the condition that he could give up his etheric powers
and he's proven that he can't do that.
he saved your life, shell.
it's unfair!
it's unfair that some people can use the ether and others can't!
have you considered, perhaps, that life is not fair?
that's easy for you to say, since the ether gives you incredible powers.
so are you talking about fairness, or jealousy?


If they want to get rid of the ether, why do they need a large source of it?
well you see... they need a large amount of power to...
um..
you know, it's so they have a form of power that... uh...
you don't know, do you?
like I said, aata knows more than I do.
so when the court leaves to start again .. people who can use the ether. .
won't be allowed to go. that's right


and you talk of fairness
a lot of people will be left behind, in that case
yup. you couldn't go
renard and arthur, obviously, since they aren't humans.
I could go, but I don't want to, without aata.
so the only people here that would be eligible are juliette and donlan
I'm not going anywhere without arthur!
just donlan, then.
you'd be a valuable asset there.
the court had their eye on you since you made a new hand for tony carver.


where does omega fit into all this?
uh . look.
your dad would be able to explain it better than I could.
my father?
it's the basis for everything
the court. the plan to leave.
it's all for the omega device
it's made everything possible...
until recently...


az, what are you doing here?
What?
aata was the leader of the shadow men, and now you're just telling us all his secrets?
you must be up to something!
that's rich, considering what you've kept secret here with the robots!
I'm not even in the shadow men anymore, I don't gain anything by telling you all this
you don't lose anything either
hey, you still technically work for them!
you...
that's enough, you two.

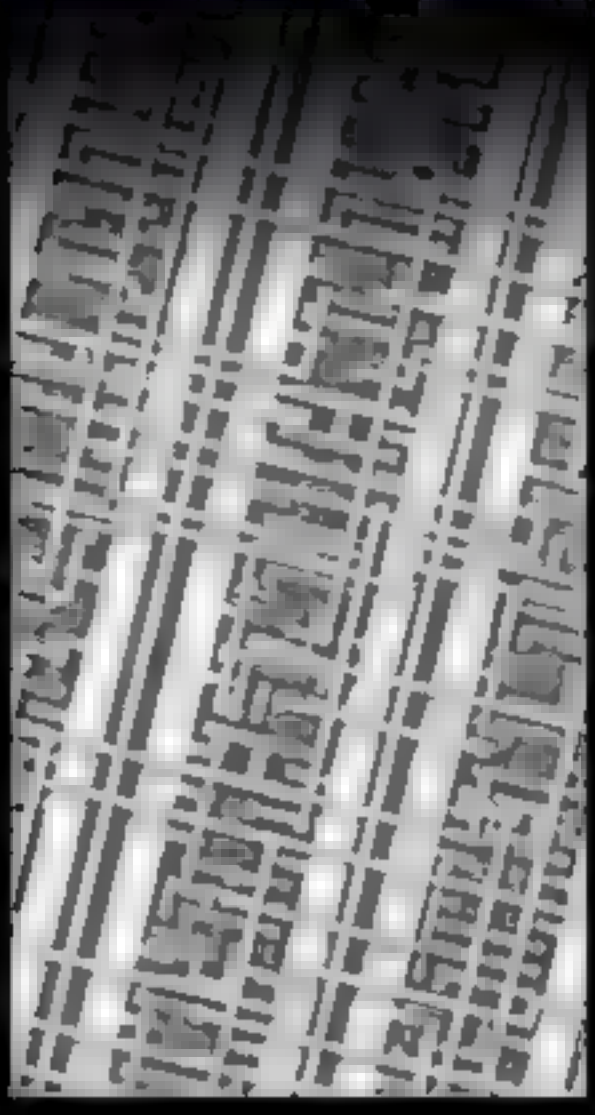

Shell, thank you for coming to us and answering our questions.
Juliette, remember, you came to us too and earned our trust.
I think it's only fair if we let Shell do the same.
And if the court and the shadow men are going to keep meddling behind the scenes, we need as much information as we can get.
While they do that, it looks like they aren't doing anything to protect the court or the people displaced by Loup, since they are just going to leave it all behind.
So it's up to us.


we need to find Loup.
and he could be anywhere
hey!
I thought you were getting a haircut?
I think I'll keep it like this for now

Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 84:

Knowledge Of Everything




are you happy now, Loup?
I suspect not!
you have my memories, but not my understanding!


and you see how the court almost tricked you!
release your anger if you wish, but know you will not find understanding through force!
you will find it in the court!
perhaps even ysengrm will help you find what you seek.
you have the pieces, now put them together!
the reason I wish for you to die!


fine
you say I have to observe this wretched place? I will do so for now.
before I tear it all down.
hmm. what's this?


well, coyote, you would disguise yourself so fully that you became your subject entirely.
I will do the same, with these walking, dead creatures
hello! are you here to dig?
um... yes.


so they dig up their bretheren. machines I buried in the dirt.
these machines had some manner of life in them, not the kind I was aware of
I saw their so called angel.
the friend fire head girl spoke of so often.
she is nothing.
a mere human
and yet these creatures she made ..
coyote, you made something similar.
you called them the glass eyed men.
heeeeyyyyy!


hey! where have you been? you're out here early!
ugh! this one!
she is nothing like antimony!
just an annoying child creature!
still, she has been useful getting me close to antimony.
I can sense her and renard off in the distance, but I cannot go to them directly.
bright light stops me
the court is full of these lights
some bright, some the deepest dark.
heh, I'm sure I'll find what I'm looking for in these places.


oh, you some of them people what's been digging around here at night?
oops! we're not supposed to be found out! hehe!
you're a strange one, like, with them eyes.
you're not real, right? like real people.
well! I think I'm real!
and I'm talking to you, aren't I?


my skin's a different colour, that's all!
yeah, and your hair and such.
but you aren't real, right? like a real person?
tsh! you tell me!
so you think I'm cute?
fair, yeah, I reckon


heh! I thought so. I know what boys like!
oh yeah?
you gonna show us?
?
CRK
OW! OW! OW!
OW!


jerrek!
ow ow! leggo!
what you doin', creep?!
you...
leave.
screw you!
up yours, man!


what did you do that for?!
didn't you see you were in danger?
no I wasn't, we were just talking!
you don't understand
those elf boys are not used to someone so... forward.
what would you know?! I've read tons more books than you!
you were just pipe maintenance -
don't be such a naive fool!


what am I doing?!
why did I intervene?!
now she's mad at me!
I didn't do anything! she was the fool!
hey, guys! here for the demo?


?
what did you do?
wha . who said I -
sigh
some elf boys found us and were, um... getting inappropriate.
with Lana.
ah you stepped in, did you?
I'd probably have done the same


my advice is to apologise, but admit to nothing.
but - but you agree with me!
when I figure out the rules of fairness, I'll let you know.
damn you, Renard! don't condescend to me!
I'll destroy you!


Okay, here goes!
ZP
Zip
Zip


pretty cool, huh?
we've seen the elves can manipulate the forest material as if it was wood
so I was really curious when I saw the matter melded with some of the court buildings.
and when I looked closer, I found a similar molecular structure permeated through everything in the court
everything I tested, anyway
bricks, concrete, glass, some plastics, anything used in construction of the buildings had a similar makeup.


the material from the forest isn't wood or stone, it's some kind of middle state.
Like it's ready to be moulded.
and so, I made these tools for you guys.
It's all still pretty basic right now, but this is going to make digging for the lost robots much easier.
Zip
Zip

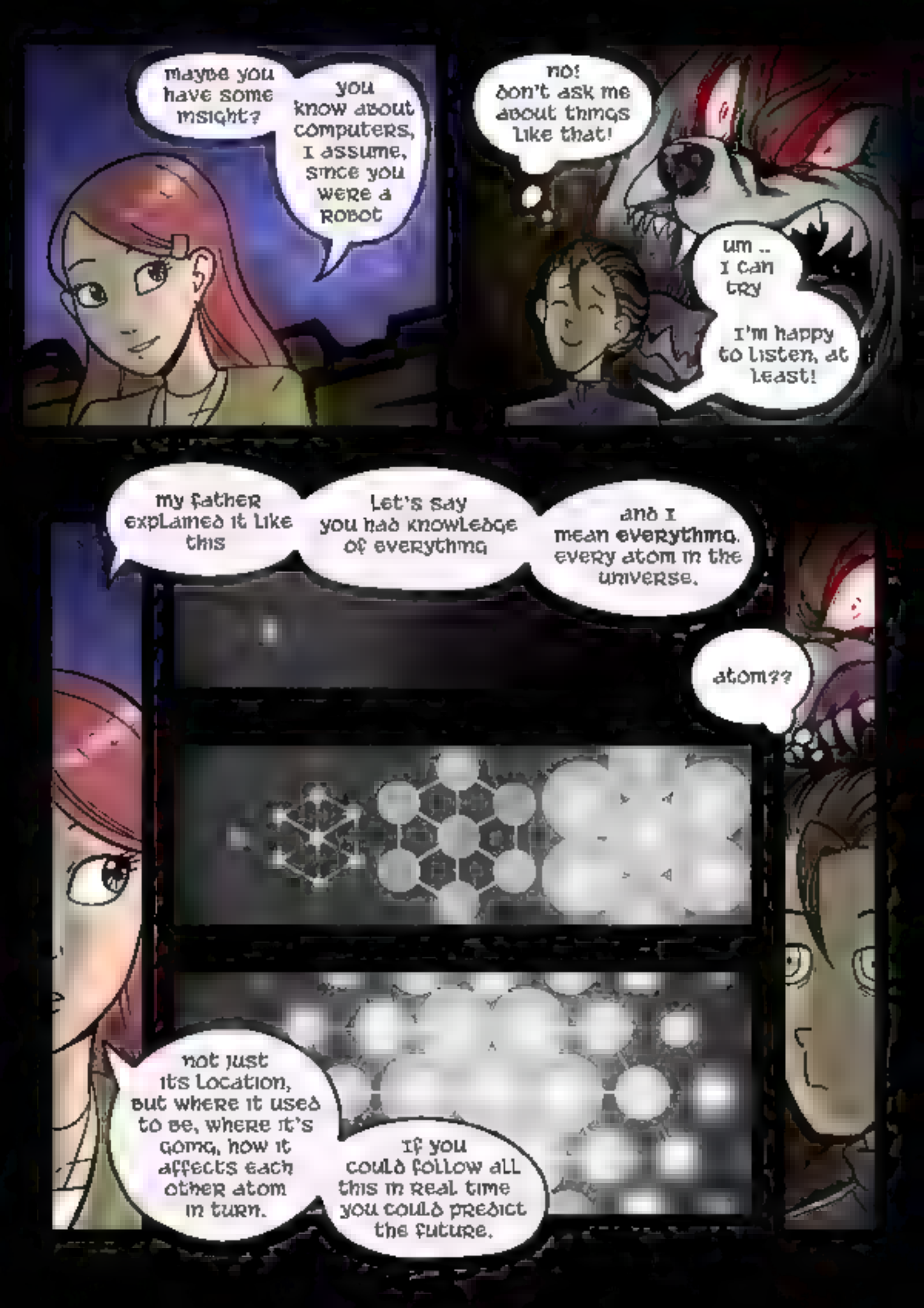

what is this? how is she able to manipulate matter in this way?
her words make no sense.
she made these creatures...
she can form things out of thin air...
and now she moves the very substance of the forest as I can?
all this without the ether?
there must be more to her than I can see...
is this what coyote wanted me to discover?
heh... for now, though...
I spot my prey


um, hi.
hello, jerrek.
she's really amazing, isn't she?
zip zip zip
yeah, kat's the best!
but .. i noticed you look a little... sad.
are you okay?
oh I just have a lot on my mind..


are you upset with me?
with you?
because of what Lana said
oh! haha!
no, no. she just said you were being overprotective of her.
I don't think you did anything wrong, really.
she's a little... forward.
that's what I said!
those boys were being improper!
haha! improper?
um... I mean , they should know not to take advantage .
well, I know you made an impression with Renard.


can I ask what you were thinking about?
I was just thinking about everything going on
loup. coyote ysengrim, too
he was my friend.
has there been any news on L-Loup?
no. he's still hiding somewhere.
what do you think he's doing?
searching, I suppose.
either for ways to destroy us all... or just looking for answers
if there's still a piece of ysengrin in him, I hope it's keeping him calm.


there is something else .
when you were a robot, did you ever hear of the omega device?
omega!
just what I was searching for!
um. no? I don't think so.
I was just talking to my father about it.
It's something the court built apparently it's very important
I talked about it with robot and arthur, and kat, of course. she finds it interesting but doesn't see why it should be so important.
I'm not sure I do either. It's a machine based on a strange theory, but I don't see why the court would destroy itself over it.


maybe you have some insight?
you know about computers, I assume, since you were a robot
no! don't ask me about things like that!
um .. I can try
I'm happy to listen, at least!
my father explained it like this
Let's say you had knowledge of everything
and I mean everything. every atom in the universe.
atom??
not just its location, but where it used to be, where it's going, how it affects each other atom in turn.
If you could follow all this in real time you could predict the future.


predicting the future? what's so special about that?
to know every atom in the universe would be the last thing that needs to be known.
the end of all knowledge.
hmm, knowledge of everything?
coyote could have knowledge of everything if he wanted, but he strictly avoided it.
why?
I can pull from this knowledge if I wish...
atoms.
there is a human belief that everything is made up of tiny, tiny stones.
little dots that vibrate and cling to each other to form mass.
so they really take that story seriously?


so you think a-atoms can be known like that? I mean, to follow one so closely, let alone all of them.
that was my first thought!
how can a computer keep track of so much at once!
bah... computer??
I see... human toys
counting machines.
a vast collection of switches.
so they count these atoms?
no. too limited.
you would need abstraction.


um. . I guess it's like this
I have one hand, see? but one hand represents other things.
five fingers
twenty seven bones.
a million other things.
that single number "one" can hold several ideas
I see...
the number itself can be an idea too.
the idea of all hands, in abstract.
you'd use another abstraction to refer to a specific hand.
jerrek's hand.
a-antimony's hand.
just annie is fine.
annie


so, instead of tracking every atom, you build a model of atomic behavior in a computer and follow that?
maybe...
but the more you abstract something, the less accurate it becomes.
maybe if you start with something smaller...
SNAP
smaller focus means better accuracy.
an enclosed system?
where you know the beginning point of everything before you begin.
but the ether would render such a device useless...
SKRTCH SKRTCH
you know about ether, jerrek?
um! I've heard about it!


but, uh, the ether adds the element of unpredictability.
the worst possible thing in an ordered system.
and you said the court already made something like this?
apparently
my father told me of expeditions he would be sent on.
he'd have instructions to observe a specific time and place and record what happened there.
then they would compare it to the predictions of the device.
47
48
it even predicted the need for a medium around the time I first came to Gunnerkrigg.
however they did it, their device at least partially works.
but recently it's been getting more accurate.


What if... you could start from new?
a new system, without the ether but with the technology to model it entirely?
well, I suppose that would work
...
but what a dire thought!
to know everything is to know an unchanging system!
you could only be an observer, even if you actively took part in that system!
a system where any occurrence is only the result of a previous occurrence.
there would be no free will, no spontaneity or agency.
a dead system.
absurd.


this is why coyote didn't want to know everything.
because it would be....
BORING!
It would have set him outside of the world and life .
and humans are headed that way
It is man's endeavour to become god!
anne, do you think ~


you know, you remind me of someone.
o-oh?
It must be your green eyes.
ah antimony...
I do miss those times...


Looks like kat's finishing up
what am I doing?!
don't lose sight of your goal!
I - I liked talking to you tonight!
yes, of course.
can we talk again?
oh! me too.


Bah! this disguise is making me clumsy, like a lovesick boy!
but she is a fool!
Little does she know I'm only doing this to get information from her!
th-that's why I'm doing this...




I like the wolves!
and the pot people!
Wha! annie!
how are you doing that?!
you just dodge when they are about to attack.
how are you so good?!
blood sex build

Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 85:

Snare




Loup!


Loup, show yourself!
this is getting ridiculous!
you hide in the ruins you created?
like a coward?


you thought calling me a coward would draw me out?
by speaking directly to ysengrin's pride?
it worked, didn't it?
it did, it did! hehe!
why are you grovelling in the dirt out here?
you've done nothing since the court tried to trick you!
does this look like I've done nothing?


Oh, so you've caused a little mess?
It's hardly a master-work.
So much for the great Loup.
This is what you do with coyote's legacy?
CRUNCH!


I'll show you I can still bare my fangs!
Just one fang, it seems!
GRRR!
CHOMP!


okay, here they come
ready!
everyone ready?


here goes!

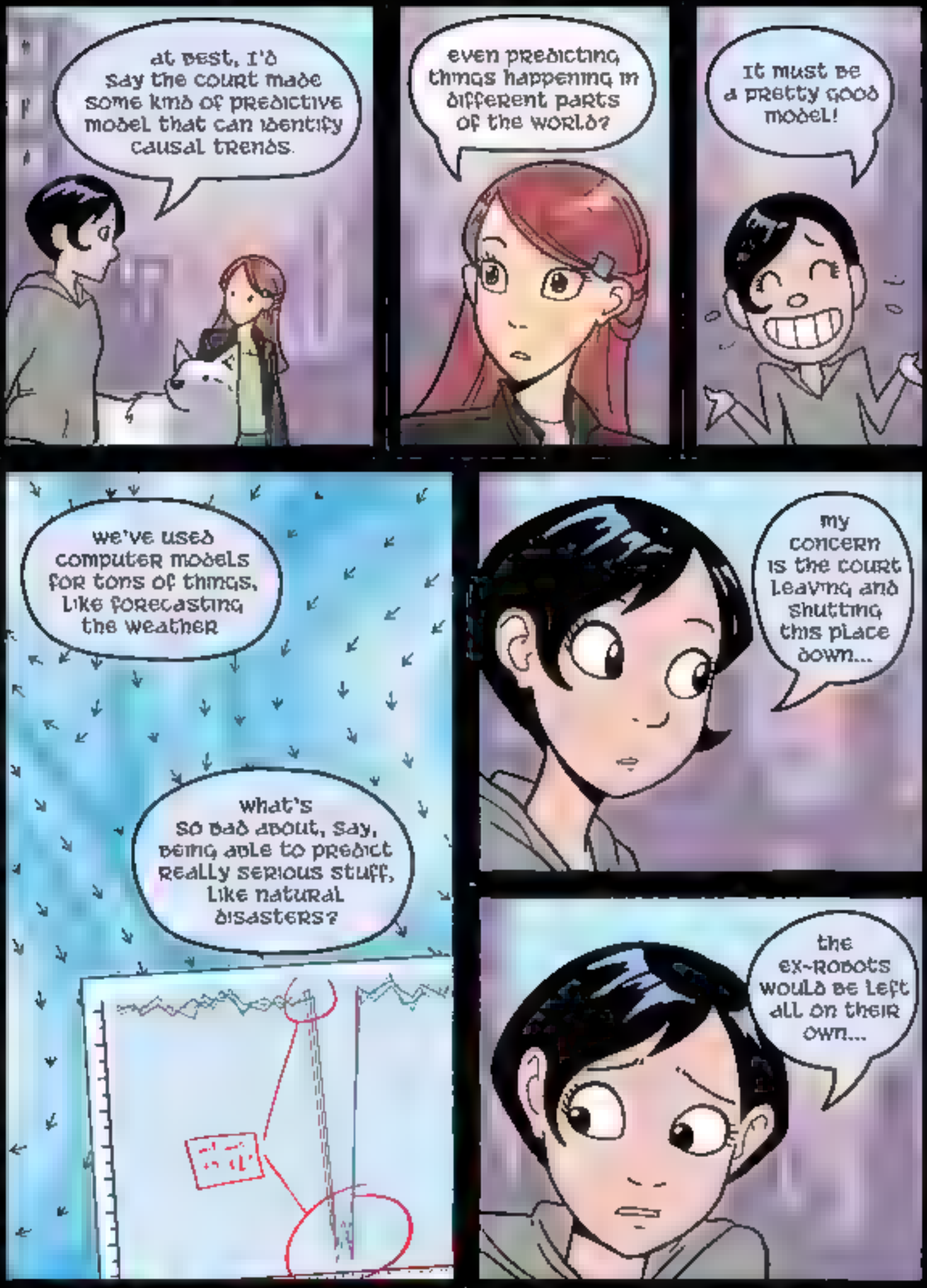

HE HEHEHE!!
KSSH
he got away!
darn!
the snare didn't work.
shucks!


SHFF
well, I think this confirms he's hiding amongst the forest creatures.
but...
he could [illegible] caught me easily.
he wasn't even trying.
there was no blood lust there.
we didn't actually want you to get caught, Renard.
I know, I know.
I just fear he is taking none of this seriously


Let's get out of here before he comes back.
thanks, both of you.
you're really getting the hang of those earth movers.
they're incredible, angel! they make our job so much easier!
we've found, like, fifty more old robots, since!
great, great!


okay, are we close enough?
yeah! we can get to the dig site from here!
uh, bye, annie!
oh! good bye!
!
?
?
?
?!


so, the omega device
you're still on that?
I don't think it even really exists.
there's no way it can work the world just isn't deterministic like that.
what do you mean?
there's just too much randomness for even a small complex system to be fully modelled.
because of the ether?
because of random quantum events, radioactive decay, things like that.
I see, yes... the ether.


at best, I'd say the court made some kind of predictive model that can identify causal trends.
even predicting things happening in different parts of the world?
It must be a pretty good model!
we've used computer models for tons of things, like forecasting the weather
what's so bad about, say, being able to predict really serious stuff, like natural disasters?
my concern is the court leaving and shutting this place down...
the ex-robots would be left all on their own...


well they'd still have us!
you, especially, kat!
it's not like you'd leave too, right?
kat!
I'm just thinking!
of course I wouldn't go, but it's interesting to think about, right?
I mean, a new place where you could follow any line of research you wanted? away from the regular rules and restrictions?
isn't that terrifying?!


only if you do bad stuff!
and who decides what is good or bad?
yeah, yeah.
I wouldn't be so glib about it, katerina.
If the court is willing to rid themselves of the ether, what else would they leave behind?
ethics? morality?
woah, hey! what's that got to do with anything?
we know what's right and [illegible]!
a hundred years ago, people thought the same thing.
and a thousand years before that.


ethics and morals are a technology developed over a far longer time than your sciences.
given the billions of people that have lived and died before you in the pursuit of "right" and "wrong", do you feel that development is at an end, here and now, as you walk the earth?
well, jeez...
I think what he's trying to say is that, the stories and myths that make up the ether are also very important lessons humankind has learned over generations.
what we know as good or bad, right or wrong is always evolving, and that evolution doesn't really happen in a science lab.
in discarding the ether entirely, the court may be discarding something important they don't even understand.


I dunno... I don't think it would be so bad to learn as much as possible...
the way Jerrek described it, knowing everything would mean there is no more new innovation or creativity.
Oh, Jerrek said that, did he?
yes, he did.
Jerrek, the guy you've been talking to a lot lately?
yes, we talked about it recently.
Jerrek, the guy who's really into you?
oh?
it's very obvious, antimony.
you think so?
come on, there's nothing wrong with a little attention from a cute guy!
he seems like a stand-up fellow.


that Renard..
I'm not taking this seriously, eh?
We'll see about that...


Donlan!
Kat! there you are!
what's up?
there's been invitations sent to some of us.
we didn't all get one, but this was addressed to you...
there's some kind of meeting happening tonight.


Renard, the people who got mutations...
they seem to be people msensitive to the ether, yes, I noticed.
kat, you should go to the meeting.
I think it's where the court will reveal their plans...
that night


yeah, my parents didn't get invites.
OR paz.
neither did I
I'll let you know what this is all about...
BIP
annie!
RENARD!
we need you both!


BIP
what's happening?!
Loup's finally shown himself!
o-oh?
BIP
don't worry, we're headed away from the robot big sites.
but it's pretty far out
BIP


BIP
ah! there you are!
you know, I do not appreciate being tricked!
what's he talking about?
and so, I have brought this .


that's-
FSSSS


Loup' how could you?!
Renard, let this be a lesson.
think on it as you forever remain a spirit without a body.
sssss!..


oh, renard, I'm so sorry
I
carver! what the hell is going on?!
uh, hold on
give them a sec...
we can figure something out.
we can try and get your body back, right?
somehow?
...


what did he mean about being tricked?
we were able to draw him out...
and tried to capture him
you did what?! after what he did last time?!
we're doing more than the court is!
we know they aren't even looking for him!
now renard has to pay for my mistake!
that should make you happy, right?!
antimony.. please...


It's nobody's fault.
We should not have taken Loup so lightly.
Let's just go home
Come on, I can get us all back.
Shouldn't you both be at the meeting, anyway?
What meeting?
BIP


BIP
Parley, can we stop off here?
We can walk the rest of the way
Oh, sure, if you want.
Be careful, with Loup still around...
I think he's made his point for now
Sorry, bud.
thanks.
BIP


Renard -
antimony -
ah, you first, please
...
these past few years you may have noticed I was in no rush to return to my original body.
I suppose I assumed it would always be there for me when I wanted it...
but more than that... I have not wanted to leave your side


Oh, Renard, I never wanted you to leave either.
not once we became friends!
and...
you can stay with me as long as you like.
I would like nothing more...
I want to be with you always.
I want to watch you grow and see what you become in the future.
but when I have to go to the psychopomps...
I would be honoured to accompany you...
if you wish.
of course!


It's decided then!
We agree to never part!
Agreed!
you know, this body isn't so bad.
HA HA!
Feh.


Jerrek, do you have a moment?
oh, um, yes.
would I be correct in saying you are the creature loup in d'sguise?


there are many new people since we started the cpu transfers, and I have met each of them in the process.
w-what do you mean?
I do not recall meeting you, though you act like I have.
well, a shame you had to figure this out so soon, tin man!
one moment


If I turn up dead, people will be quick to question what happened.
you will be found out shortly after.
..
I will not share your secret
In fact, I will continue to maintain your disguise.
oh?
It is not my concern what you are planning.
I only ask that you do not interfere with our work, or the work of the angel


my business is not with any of you.
then I ask that you do not harm any of the newly awakened.
anyone else, you can do with as you wish.
oho! you're a strange one, behind that smiling mask!
very well. this is acceptable.


hmm?
antimony, look.
down there.
is the meeting over?
is that kat?


kat?
what's going on?
isn't an ocean...
this

Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 86:

Confessions



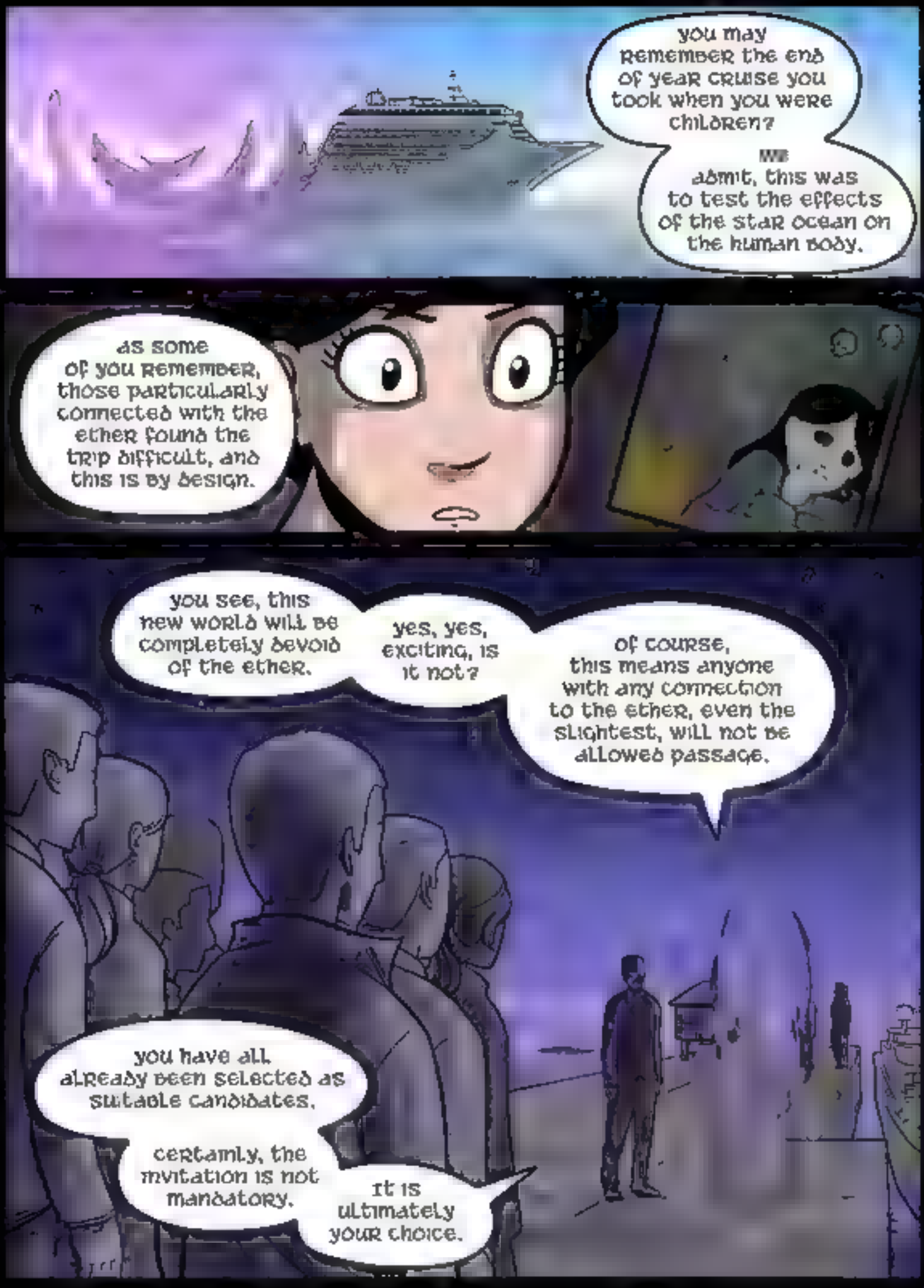

what's this all about?
no idea...
janet?
janet!

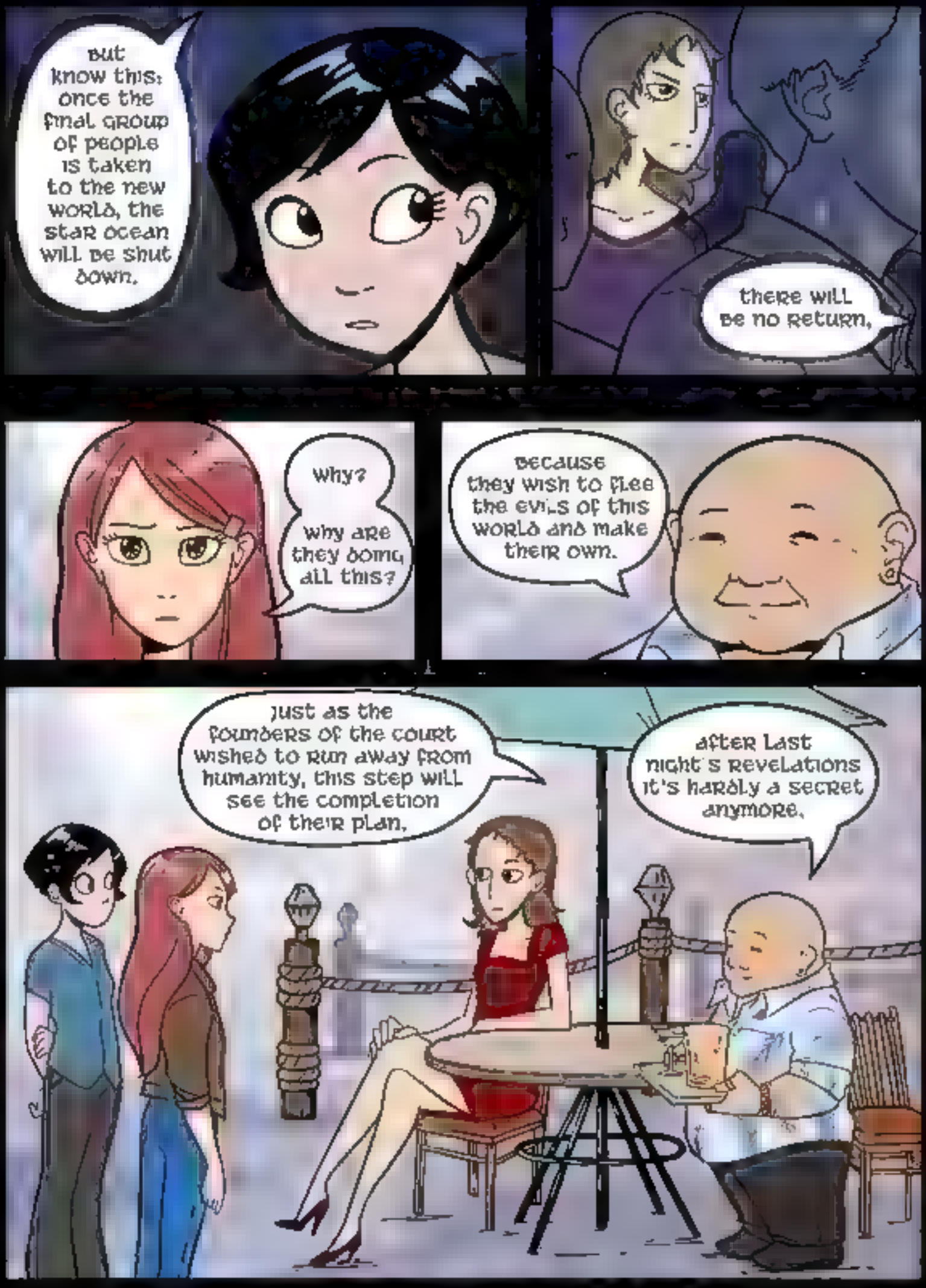

where is she?!
they promised me!
why isn't she here?!
what the hell...
is that llanwellyn?
look...
SPLSH
CLUNK
BRMMMM


thank you all for coming.
do not let my appearance alarm you.
some of you may know the court has started relocating some of its people.
what you may not know is the new court is on a different planet.
this ocean is our method of travelling the stars.

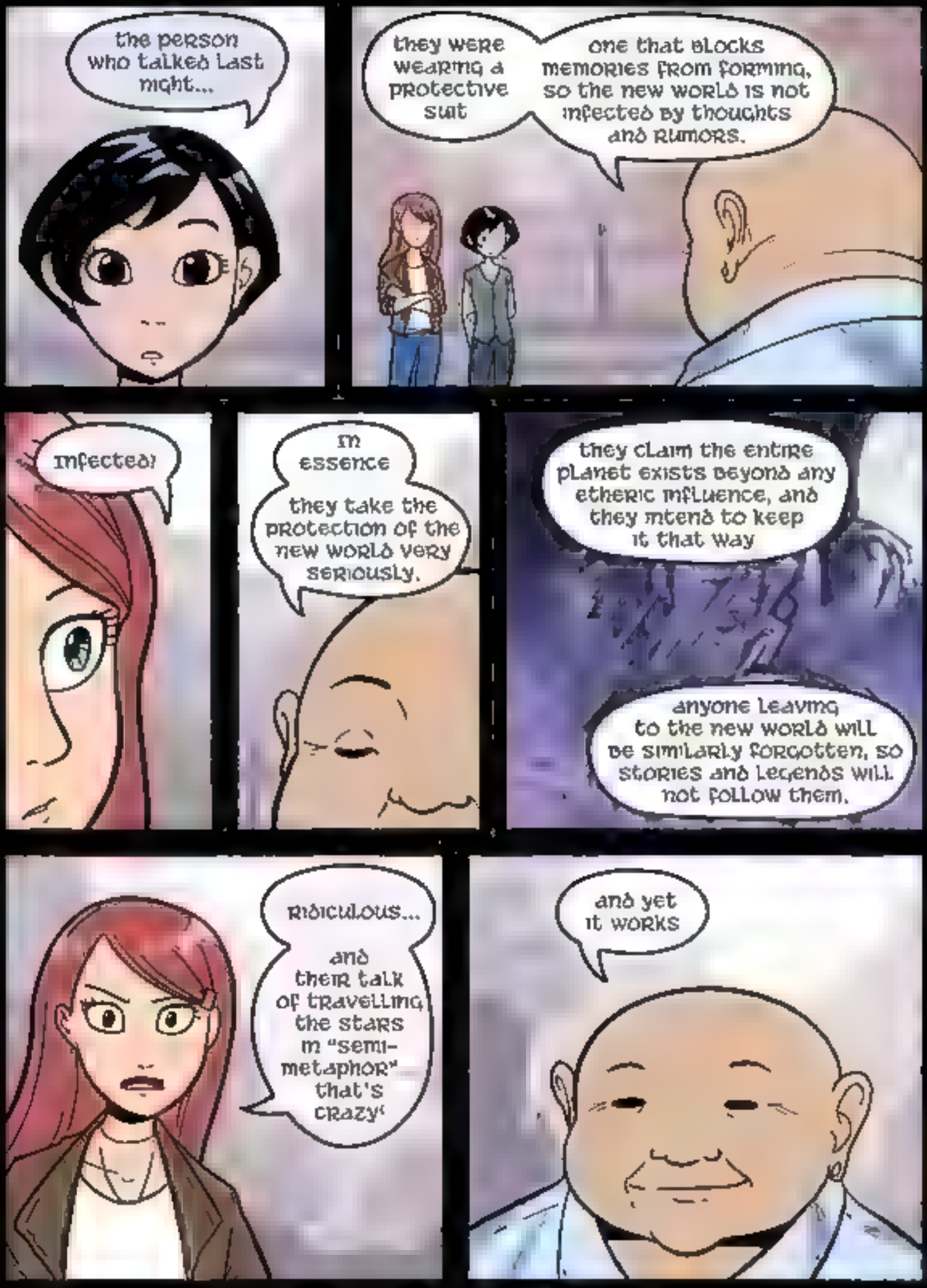

what?!
kat, who was saying all this?
that's the thing .. I don't remember!
I don't know what they looked like, or even what they sounded like, even though I looked right at them...
I only remember what they said...
the entire resources of the court have been for this development.
all our research, experimentation and, yes, even our secrecy was in this pursuit.
and as the finest minds of the court, you have worked to this goal as well.


the star ocean you see before you is a miracle of etheric and scientific design.
now, I know what you are thinking; etheric design?
well, thanks to our unique situation, we have been able to fully utilise the raw power of ether and create a method that allows us to travel the stars in a semi-metaphorical state.
It is for passage only, to a very real new world.
with this last crutch afforded to us by the ether, we can finally shed ourselves of this vestigial part of human development and build our future on solid, scientific foundations.


you may remember the end of year cruise you took when you were children?
admit, this was to test the effects of the star ocean on the human body.
as some of you remember, those particularly connected with the ether found the trip difficult, and this is by design.
you see, this new world will be completely devoid of the ether.
yes, yes, exciting, is it not?
of course, this means anyone with any connection to the ether, even the slightest, will not be allowed passage.
you have all already been selected as suitable candidates.
certainly, the invitation is not mandatory.
it is ultimately your choice.

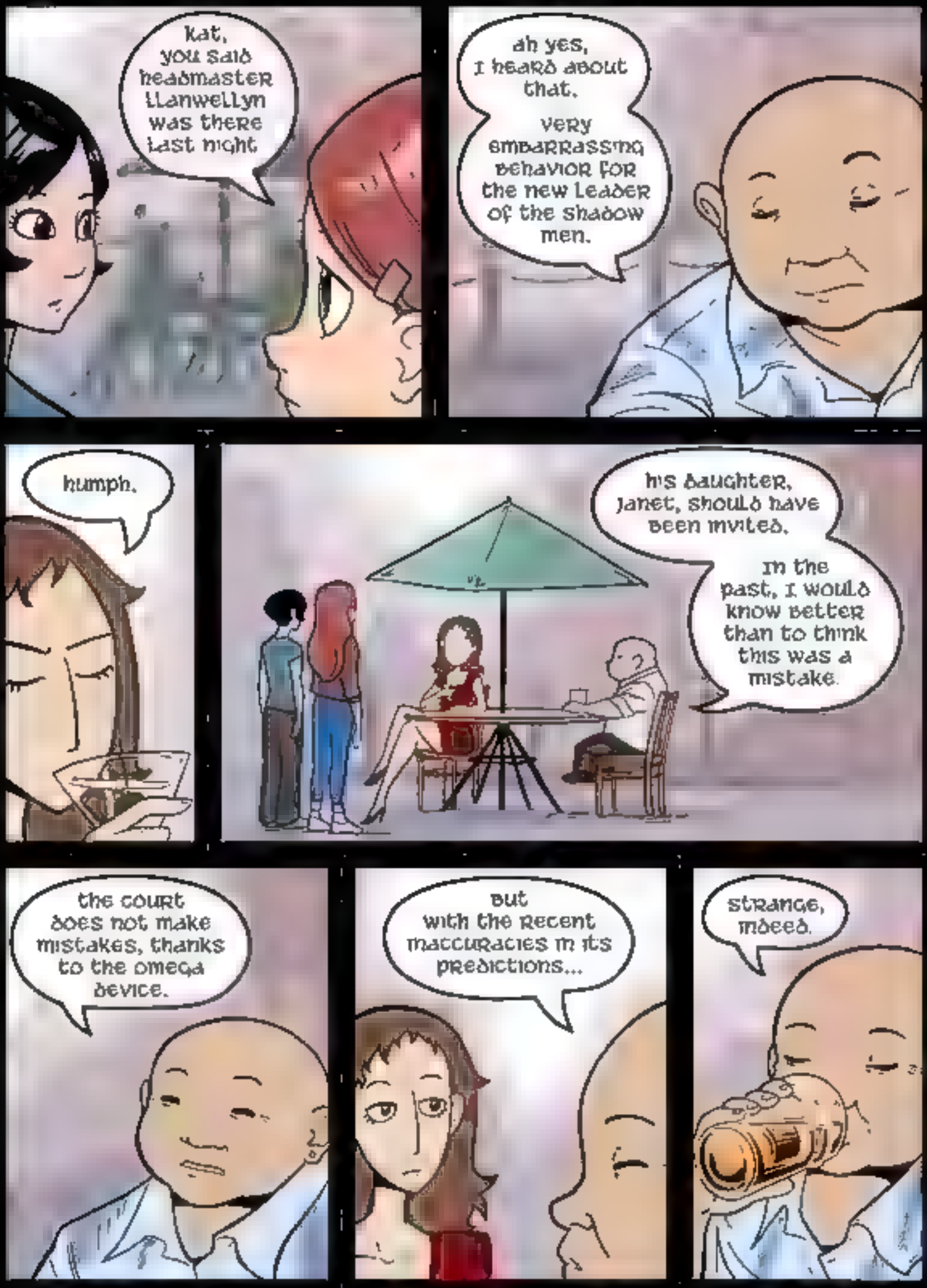

But know this: once the final group of people is taken to the new world, the star ocean will be shut down.
there will be no return.
why?
why are they doing all this?
because they wish to flee the evils of this world and make their own.
just as the founders of the court wished to run away from humanity, this step will see the completion of their plan.
after last night's revelations it's hardly a secret anymore.

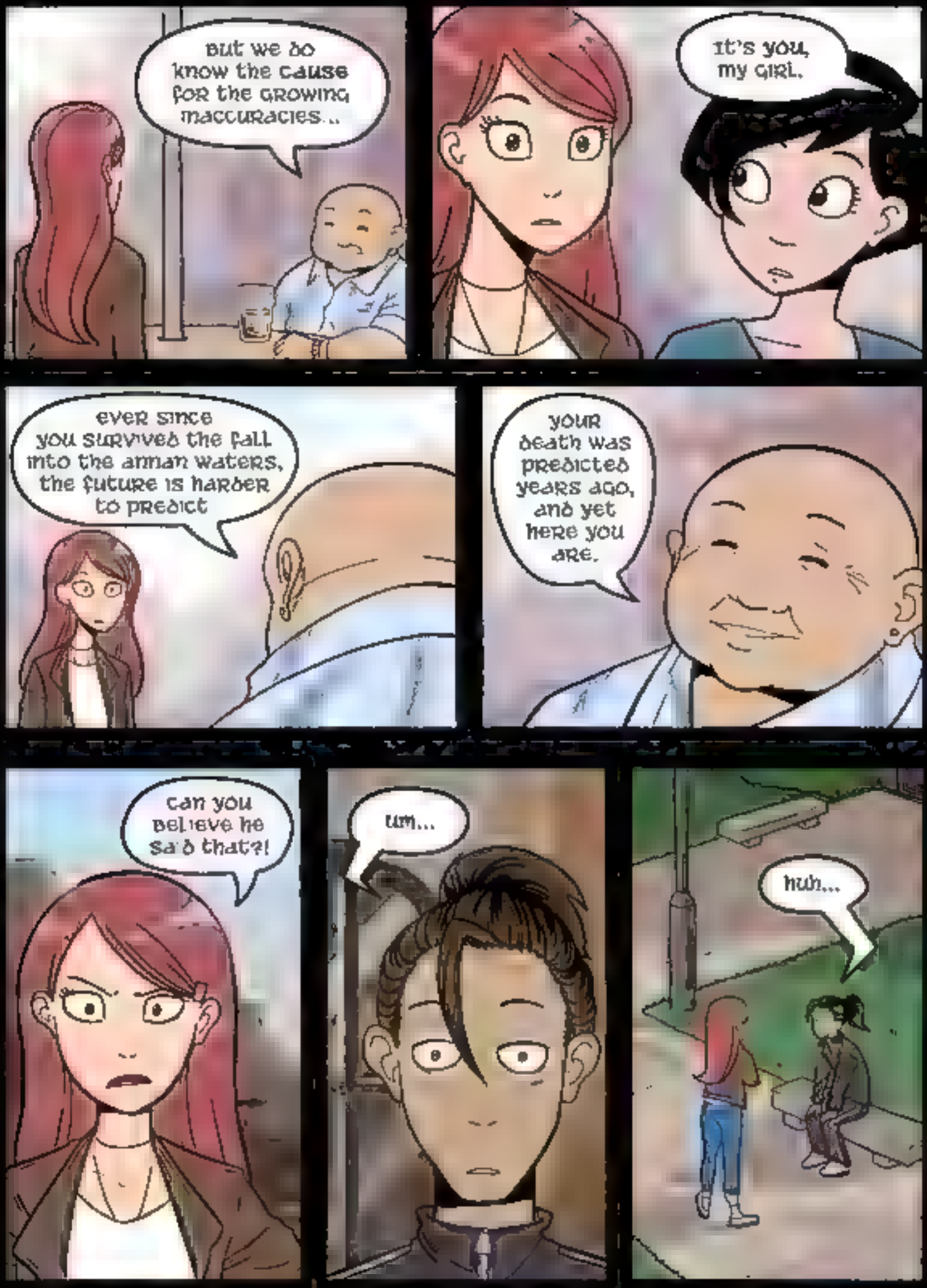

escaping into gillitie wood was just one step.
the founders hid from war, from the unjust, and began their work in tandem with the etheric creatures of the forest.
along the way, they realised they could obtain what they wished only if they were in full control of their future.
possible only if they rid themselves of the ether
coyote's arrival cemented their resolve.
but all the creatures that helped... the fairies, the ex-forest creatures ..
they are not invited, of course.


the person who talked last night...
they were wearing a protective suit
one that blocks memories from forming, so the new world is not infected by thoughts and rumors.
infected!
in essence
they take the protection of the new world very seriously.
they claim the entire planet exists beyond any etheric influence, and they intend to keep it that way
anyone leaving to the new world will be similarly forgotten, so stories and legends will not follow them.
ridiculous...
and their talk of travelling the stars in "semi-metaphor" that's crazy!
and yet it works


so this.. star ocean... it can really send people into space from earth?
oh! haha, the star ocean is not on earth!
we've not been on earth for some time!
have you never wondered how we have so much space?
or why the weather never changes near the shore?
the court extends into a compressed dimension, the bounds of which are the star ocean.
It's a very stable technology that eliminates the need for planetary launch.
but, it's partially etheric, which is why so many etheric creatures are attracted here.


the... person mentioned the ocean was partially etheric, too.
that's right, and you've met some of its architects before.
Lindsey and her husband, Bud.
they're both not of this earth
they're aliens?!
aliens are real?!
think of it like this:
using human thought as the seed, the ether can bring to life all manner of creatures and beings. not just their form, but even their origin
humans have long dreamed of meeting other life amongst the stars
and here the court has met a few.
ones that are in tune with the ether, no less.
make of that what you will

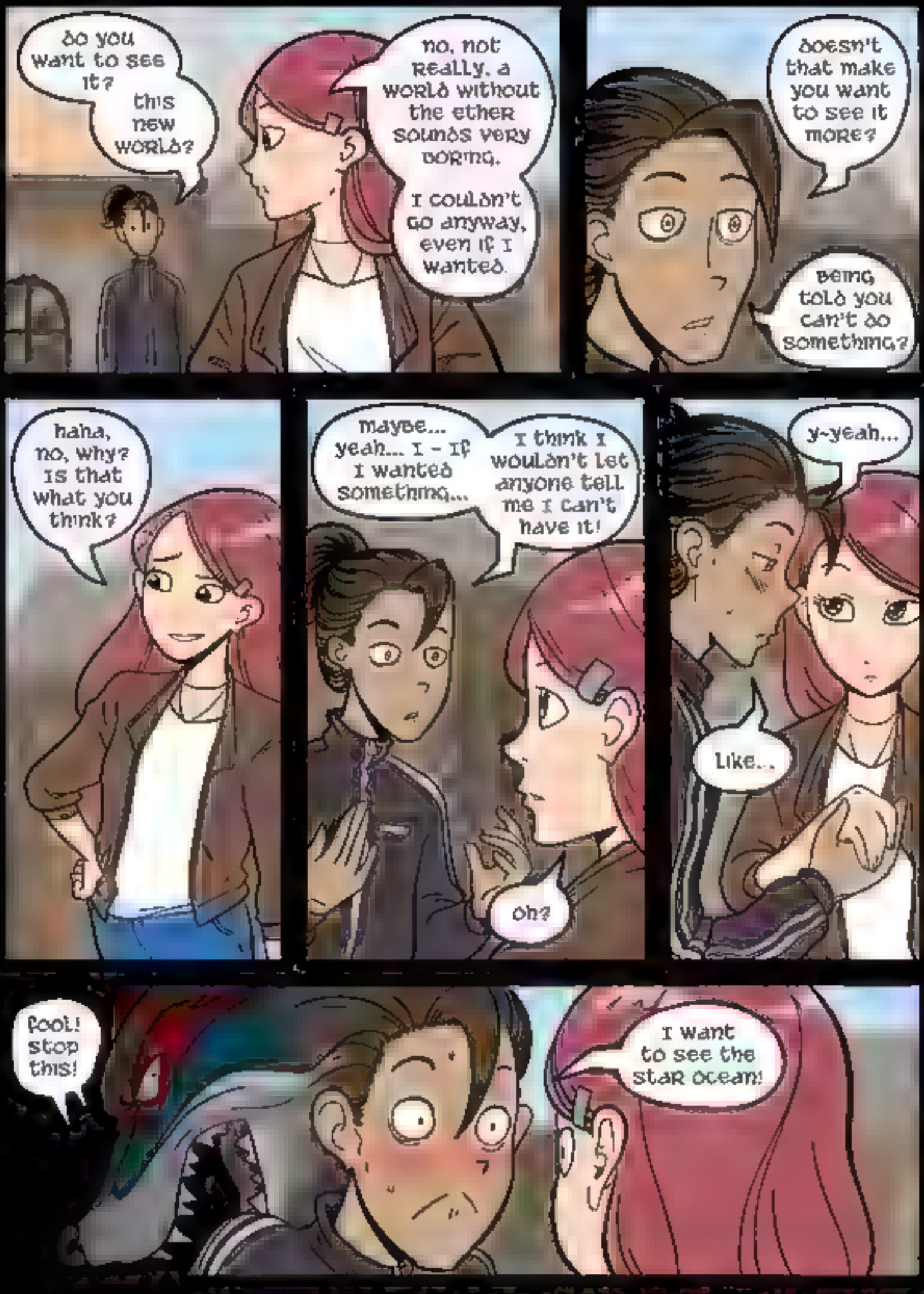

kat, you said headmaster llanwellyn was there last night.
ah yes, I heard about that.
very embarrassing behavior for the new leader of the shadow men.
humph.
his daughter, janet, should have been invited.
in the past, I would know better than to think this was a mistake.
the court does not make mistakes, thanks to the omega device.
but with the recent inaccuracies in its predictions...
strange, indeed.


But we do know the cause for the growing inaccuracies...
It's you, my girl.
Ever since you survived the fall into the annan waters, the future is harder to predict
Your death was predicted years ago, and yet here you are.
Can you believe he said that?!
Um...
Huh...


so. this is how they will do it.
how they will become gods... of their own new world.
is this what coyote was interested in?
but she just said we cannot travel there... nothing bound to the ether can make the voyage
perhaps if I can get closer to this ocean of stars...
either way, I no longer need this fool now that I know their designs!


uh...
?
W-well... I think it's good that you didn't die!
If you had, then you wouldn't have been around to influence Kat, right?
and she wouldn't have made the new robot bodies...
and ~ uh ~ we might not have met...
oh... yes I suppose so.
...


so! um...
what do you think loup would say about these plans?
loup? why do you ask?
uh! everyone's talking about it, right?
isn't he trying to figure out what the court's up to as well?
oh, well I'm not sure. he'd probably be angry in some way.
why's that?
he just gets angry and lashes out at everything.
I don't think he even knows what he's looking for.
what if... he came to you and uh... asked what the court was doing?
haha, there's no way we'd believe he was sincere!
not after what he did to renard.


do you want to see it? this new world?
no, not really. a world without the ether sounds very boring.
I couldn't go anyway, even if I wanted.
doesn't that make you want to see it more?
being told you can't do something?
haha, no, why? is that what you think?
maybe... yeah... I - if I wanted something...
I think I wouldn't let anyone tell me I can't have it!
oh?
y-yeah...
like...
fool! stop this!
I want to see the star ocean!


Oh! But it's all the way at the coast. It's too risky for you to travel there.
We could figure it out, right?
I could sneak over there or something!
at night!
We could go at night!
But -
Meet me here this evening!
We'll go together!
Argh!


that night
what am I doing?!
I can't even go near this ocean of stars or whatever it is!
why was I so insistent?
hey!
L-Lana!
I'm coming with you!


uh.. where?
I know you're going to see Annie.
you're going to the shore, right?
I don't want you to go with her!
why? what's wrong with you?!
because...
I'S none of your business!
because I love you, Jerrek!


Wh~
I do!
I love you!
I love everything about you!
I want you to be mine!
What's going on?!
well.. perhaps this could work to my advantage...


Later
Jerrek?
you came!
we're ready to go!
oh, Lana's coming too?
yeah that's okay, right?
after all, she is my
girlfriend.
hehe!


some people have actually chosen to go to the new world.
they're getting ready to go as soon as possible.
wow! a whole new planet!
I wonder what it's like...
um annie...
I hope you're not too jealous.
you know, of Lana and me.
why would I be jealous?
I'm happy for you!


Bah! Doesn't she care?
She was always stoic, but I thought this would at least get a reaction from her.
And now I have to put up with this fool!
annoying!
a foolish misstep!
this disguise of mine is -
Wha-


What's this?!
this must be the star ocean!
I-I can feel it pulling at me, even at this distance!
it uses ether as a source of power, so it would absorb and destroy a creature like me.
that's why the court wanted my power, as mere means to fuel their escape from this world!


Is this what coyote wanted me to learn?
But he said I would die when I figure out his plan... but..
he would want me to see this new world, right?!
But I cannot travel there unless I die!
I-I'm going to die!
B-B-But I don't want to die!
TAP TAP TAP TAP TAP


SHFFFF
we're just a couple more stops away now.
c'mon, JERREK!
huh?!
Wai-
CLNK


GRRR!
wh-why did you do that?
HUFF HUFF
I can tell something's wrong with you!
you look sick!
you've been getting worse and worse as we went!
Bah...
I'm worried about you, Jerrek!
my name is not Jerrek, damn you!


you...
you're that loup creature
eh?!
STOMP
STOMP
I said I love everything about you!
and I mean it!



It's been a while!



the last time I made an update like this was over 9 years ago, so I thought it would be a good time to get caught up!

I'm still having the best time I can imagine working on my comic every day, and the support from the readers over the years has been so incredible, I've been able to move to another country, find a permanent place to live, and keep working on the story. none of that would have been possible without the many people who continue to follow along even after all this time!

there have been so many changes over the last few years, I'm happy that the comic remains a point of consistency, and I'm still doing my best to make sure I never miss an update!

some of you might notice that events in the comic are heating up, and it's true that I'm slowly turning this giant, lumbering vessel of a comic into it's final port. there is still a ways to, though, and still a lot of things to happen before it's all over.

thank you so much!

tom


hello there! It's time once again for a two week break!
chapter 87 will begin on
monday, the 31st of october.
we've got some fun stuff lined up, though, and the site will be updating every day until the new chapter starts!
keep your chin up and don't give in! thank you for reading!

GUNNERKRIGG GAMERZ TIMEZ


Should we upgrade our Spectrum ZX?
DIZZY
What would you even need 48k for? We already have 16ks!
Skool DAZE
Maybe it can display more colours?
Heh, the day we need anything more than Yellow, Cyan, Magenta and Green, I'll KNOW we're in the future!

GUNNERKRIGG GAMERZ TIMEZ



GUNNERKRIGG GAMERZ TIMEZ


Y'know, I just finished that new game, Shadow Of The Colossus, and it was really good!
GUN GRIFFON BLAZE
TOH SHIN DEN
I really liked ICO, too!
GUN GRIFFON BLAZE
TOH SHIN DEN
I can't wait for their next game!
I hope it comes out soon!
GUN GRIFFON BLAZE
TOH SHIN DEN
IT DIDN'T
It took a long time to make The Last Guardian
TOH SHIN DEN

GUNNERKRIGG GAMERZ TIMEZ


Hey, Annie, wanna play an MMO?
More like M M NO
How about the new Zelda? You like Link, right?
More like STINK
How about Far Cry?
More like Far CRY HARDER, NOOB
What have you been playing to make you like this?!
Cookie Clicker

GUNNERKRIGG GAMERZ TIMEZ


Can you believe that Always Online DRM they have for Sim City?!
Do they expect us to keep our modem on just to play the game?!
What if I need to make a phone call!
Or I could be waiting for an important fax to come in!
It'll never catch on

Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 87:

Reconfiguration:

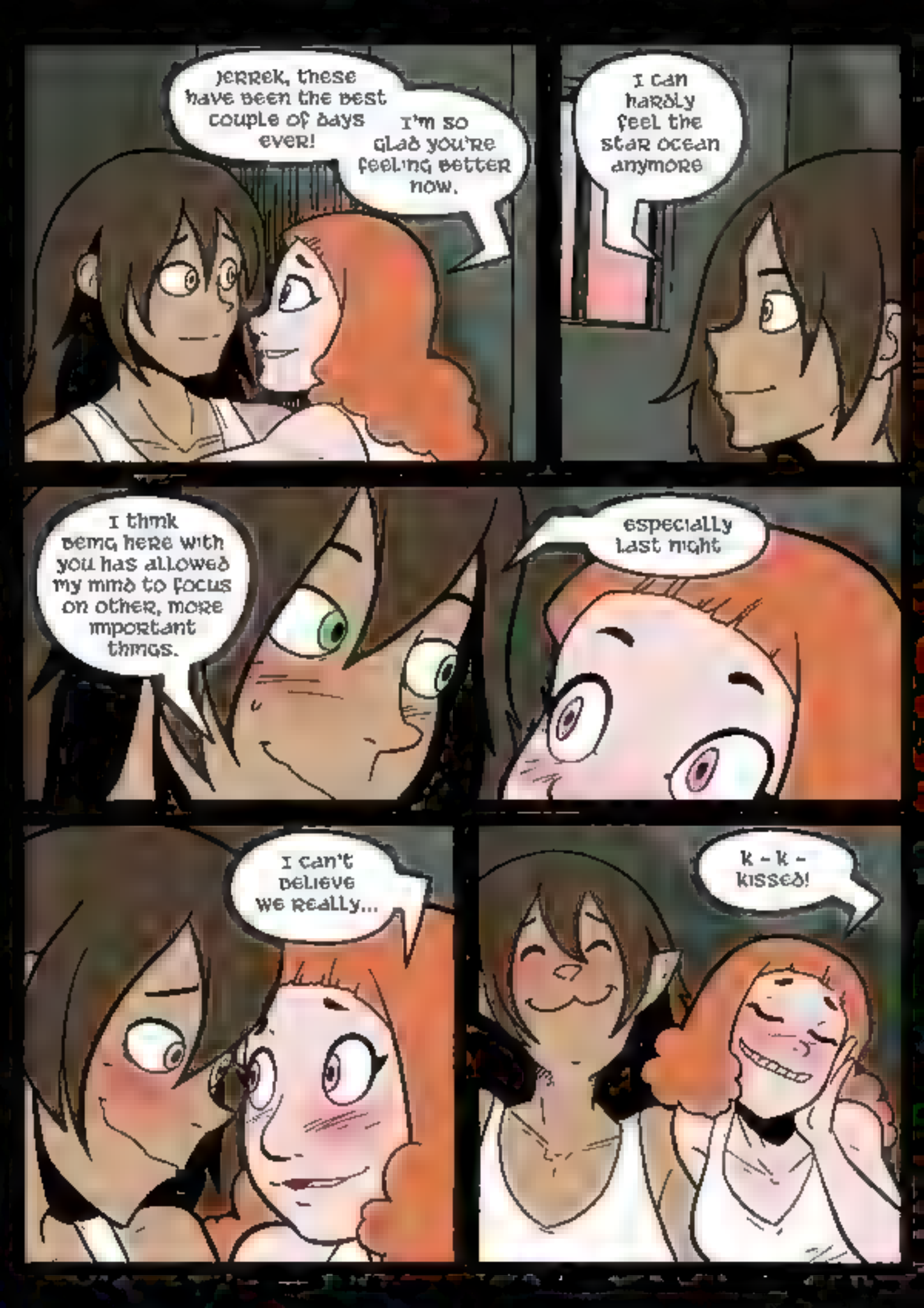



ah.
did you feel that?
something changed.


why now?
we can't be sure that's what it is
it's going to happen sooner or later.
and when it does
they aren't going to like what I'll do...


It is...
something has changed.
love


how can you be so beautiful?!
hee!
I can see the material of your eyes down to the subatomic and beyond...
I can see each and every element that makes them whole...
and yet I cannot fathom how your soul resides in there in you.
is this the hand of the divine?
hehe! you charmer!


Jerrek, these have been the best couple of days ever!
I'm so glad you're feeling better now.
I can hardly feel the star ocean anymore
I think being here with you has allowed my mind to focus on other, more important things.
especially last night
I can't believe we really...
k-k-kissed!


what happens next?
We can go back home, the others will be wondering where we are!
Let them wonder!
If you wish, I could carve out a slice of this world just for you!
I can hunt the largest animals! bring you the rarest jewels!
aw! you don't have to do anything fancy like that!
I just like to be with you!
but, I know you have things you need to do... right?
ah... yes...


annie...
do you like her?
I... I thought I did.
but it's nothing compared to how I feel about you!
but I'm still drawn to her. it must be down to that idiot, ysengrin.
hey! you said ysengrin is a part of you now.
don't talk about yourself like that!
ysengrin and coyote were both really close with her, right? I guess it's only natural you still like her.
I do, but... as something else...
hee! that makes me jealous!


I know she's at the center of what coyote has planned for me.
and. . I think she has to kill me.
what?!
there's still a piece of coyote's plan missing, and I think she has it!
Look..
my tooth.
coyote gave it to her


can't we just... talk to her?
maybe get the tooth back?
I... don't know if I want it back.
coyote told me that when I do figure out his plan, I will want to die...
but I can't imagine that, now that I found you.
maybe I don't want to figure out what he wanted for me in that case.
I wouldn't want that either!


What if he could be reasoned with?
after everything, Loup's done, so you think that's a possibility?
...
no.


kat!
did you find anything out?
yeesh, I sure did.
some people from the court met with me and my parents last night.
they were trying to convince me to go to this new world.
I made it clear I'm not leaving.
especially since they wouldn't even allow my parents to go if they wanted.
don't worry! I turned them down!


It's an incredible technology though, this Star Ocean of theirs.
that, and the dimensional compression of the court's made me rethink my computer entirely...
1 = Old Position
2 = New Position
3 = Predicted Position
Not to scale
I based my matter transference on the idea that the earth has certain coordinates moving in dimensional space, but considering the court compresses that space, it shouldn't work.
but it does, which implies their technology exists at such a low level that other rules of physics can be built on top of it
...
uh well, anyway.
It's official, Loup's off the hook, I guess


what? how so?
Rey, do you remember when you came to rescue us during that whole robot boat, zimmy thing?
I do.
well, that should have been excruciating for you. the whole star ocean is set up to absorb ether.
the stronger the ether is in someone, the more effect it should have had.
but I did not feel anything untoward about the ocean itself
exactly, it was calibrated for coyote.
it's probably why loup wasn't able to come to the ocean directly. it would have driven him crazy.
at least, that was the case until now.
the whole system's been reconfigured.


what do you mean?
well, with Loup missing, and still a danger, the court is pushing forward on their schedule to leave
so the Star Ocean's been reconfigured to accept an enormous amount of ether from a source other than coyote.
but .. where would they find something like that?
I was going to ask you guys.
about another creature with such power?
yeah, can you think of anything in the forest that can do anything similar to coyote?


In the forest?
Coyote could alter reality itself...
His power was even able to divide you in two.
But that was reversed by ..
Oh... don't tell me ..
Zimmy!
Huh?!
Were friends now

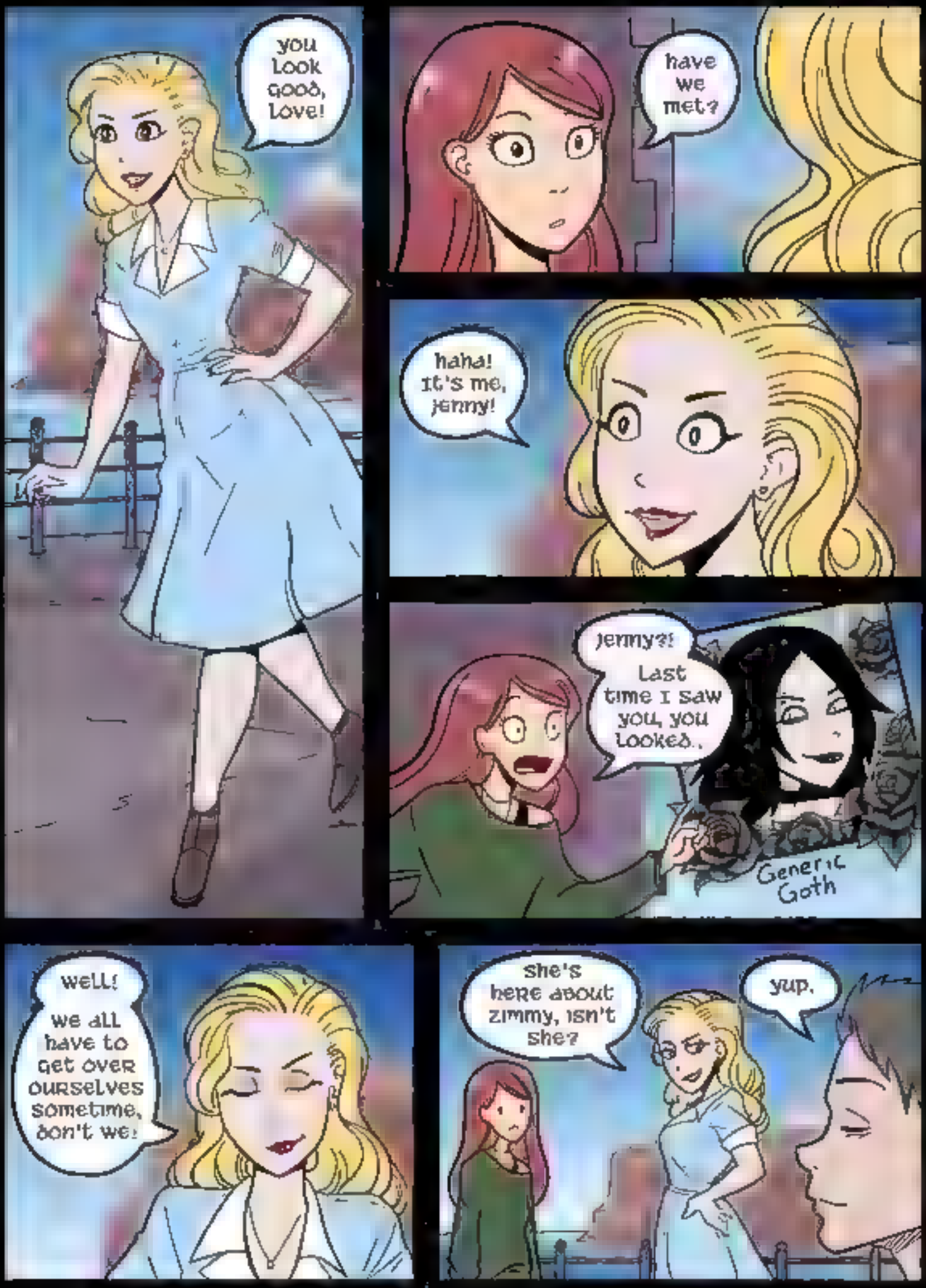

Interfering with that girl would be insane!
Is she really that powerful?
Worse, the poor creature has access to such destructive power, but is barely able to control it
that incident on the boat may be just a fraction of what she is capable of.
I was hoping I might be able to avoid killing Loup, [illegible] court set its sights elsewhere...
But going after Zimmy... we have to warn her!
I guess... I can't put it past the court to cause someone harm for their own needs...

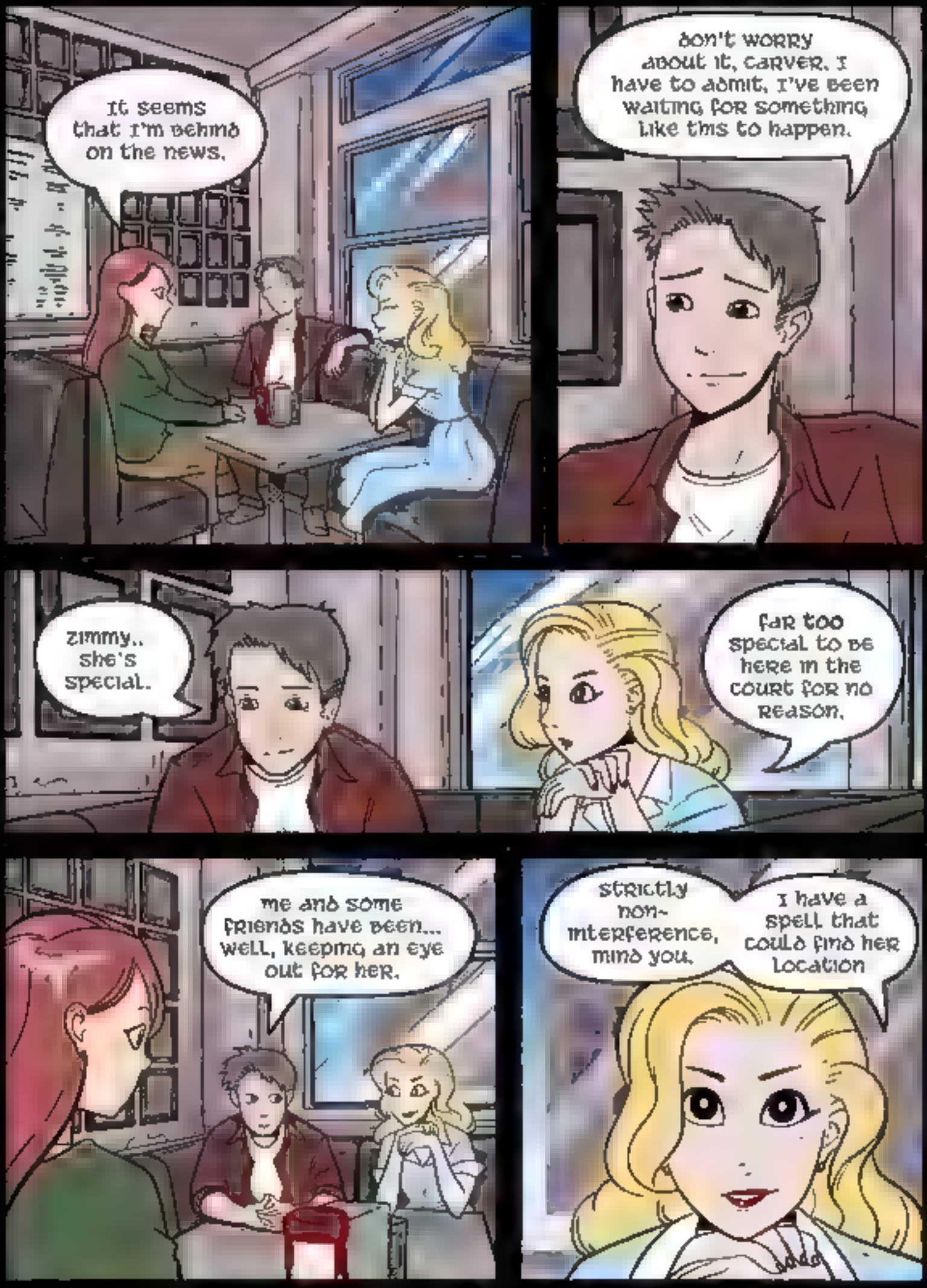

so instead of looking for Loup, we have to find Zimmy?
how would we go about that?
I don't know. She just seems to... turn up
It's ridiculous that we have to be running around looking for people.
the court has technology that can do that for them.
and I think it's time we put it to use our selves
you mean...
yeah, the omega device
If it really is just a predictive model then I wouldn't be interested, but now that I've seen what kind of technology the court produces, it could be something really special.

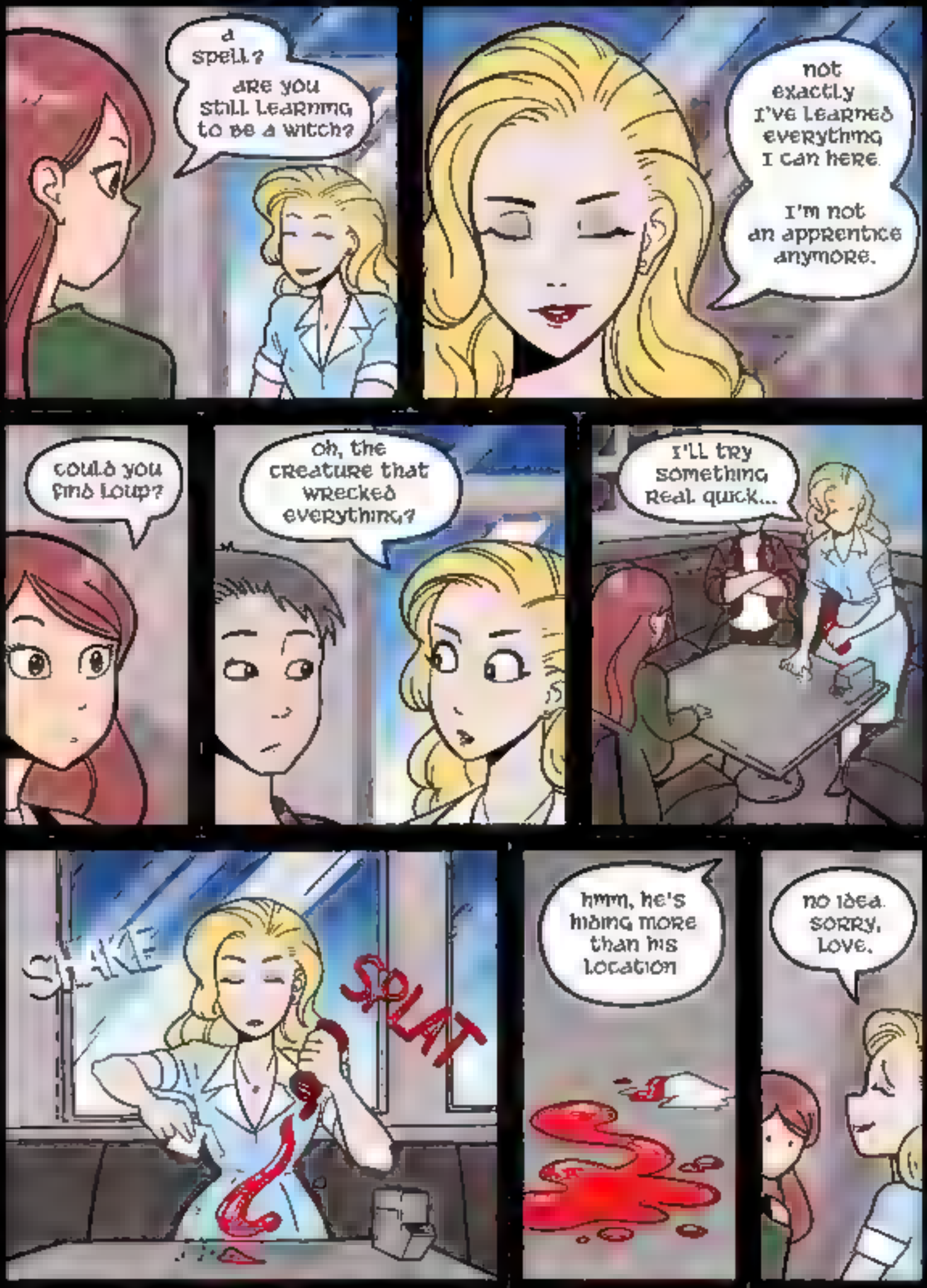

I was going to rework my computer anyway
and if this omega device is anything as sophisticated as the star ocean, I think a little hacking could be in order, hehe.
you know, perhaps patching into an external system, if you know what I mean?
haha!
and we can use it to look for zimmy?
well, amongst other things, sure
how long will that take?
no idea.
well, in the meantime
I think I might know someone who could find [redacted]...


heeey, carver!
It's been a while!
hello, jack.
thanks for meeting with me
jack, I need to ask you about zimmy.
haha, you're trying to find her because of the star ocean, right?
huh?!
haha, we figured it out too!


you might be the one dealing with the forest stuff and this coyote guy,
or Loup, or whatever.
but the rest of us have to keep busy too, you know.
so you know what the court is up to?
everybody does!
some of my friends are actually going to the new world, can you believe that?
I'm not invited, of course
if things had been different, maybe...
my, look who it is!


you look good, love!
have we met?
haha! it's me, jenny!
jenny?!
Last time I saw you, you looked..
Generic Goth
well! we all have to get over ourselves sometime, don't we!
she's here about zimmy, isn't she?
yup.


It seems that I'm behind on the news.
don't worry about it, carver. I have to admit, I've been waiting for something like this to happen.
zimmy.. she's special.
far too special to be here in the court for no reason.
me and some friends have been... well, keeping an eye out for her.
strictly non-interference, mind you.
I have a spell that could find her location

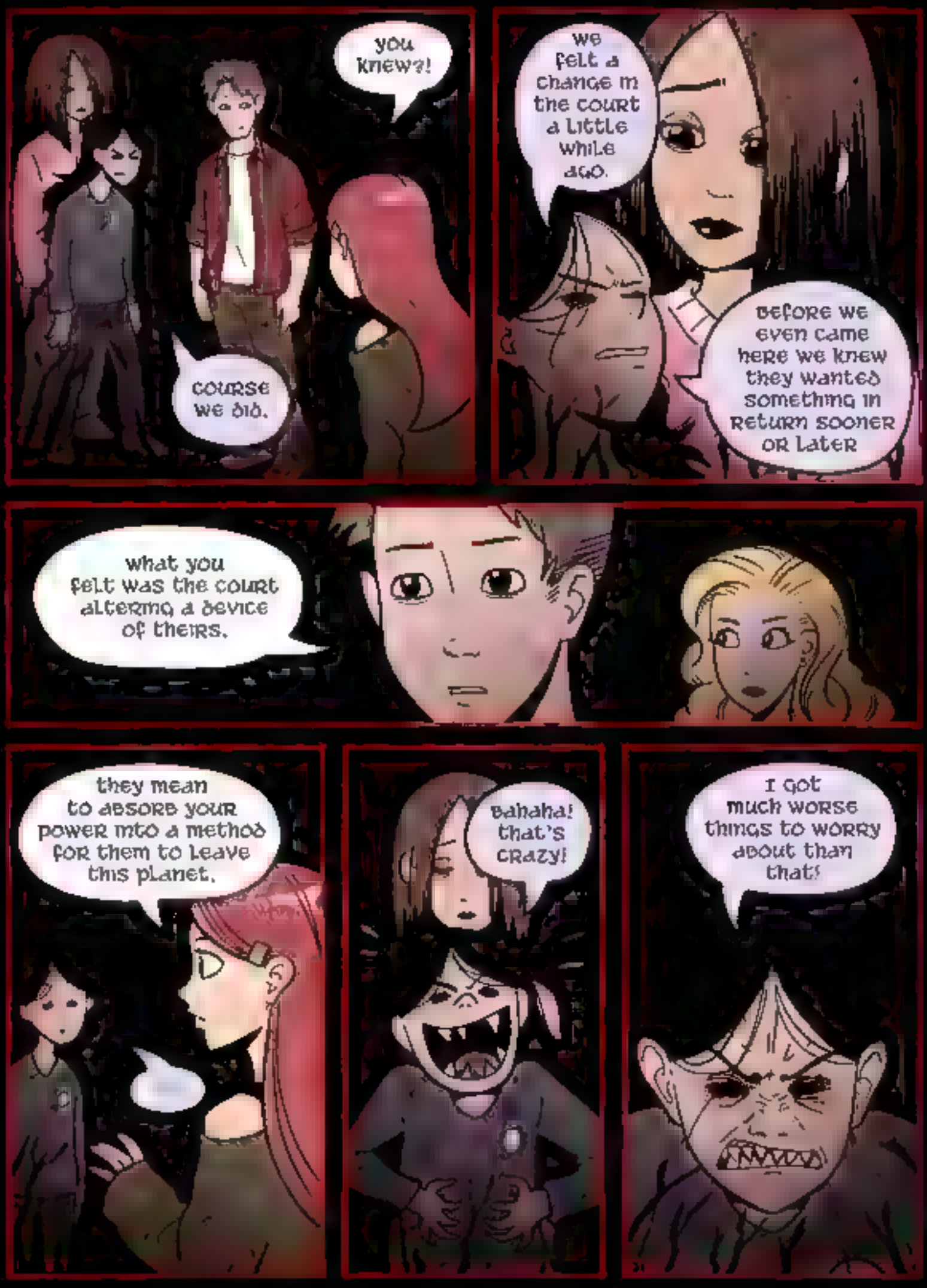

a spell?
are you still learning to be a witch?
not exactly I've learned everything I can here.
I'm not an apprentice anymore.
could you find Loup?
oh, the creature that wrecked everything?
I'll try something real quick...
SHAKE
SPLAT
hmm, he's hiding more than his location
no idea. sorry, love.

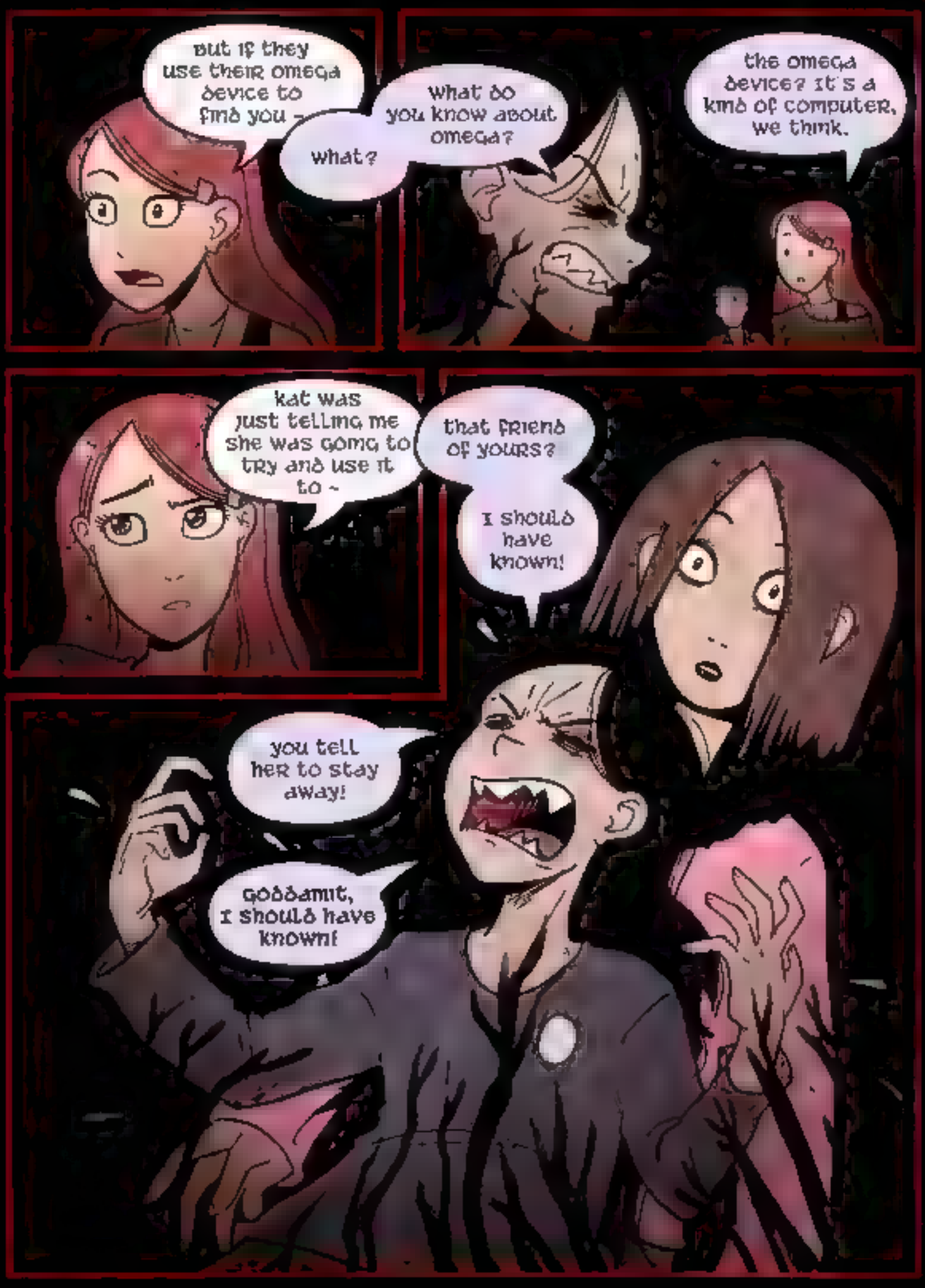

Zimmy, on the other hand, doesn't exactly hide, but she does want to be left alone
She hates even the notion that someone's looking for her.
I could pinpoint her location exactly, but the closer we get to that, the more she notices.
So we only finish the spell if we really need to find her.
I think this might be the time.
We agree
So, how do we go about doing this?
Let's find somewhere a little less public


this'll do.
you stand here
and you over here, love


CARVER?


what's all this damn light?!
I can barely see ya.
that's got to be the star ocean.
huh?
oh.. it's you.
hello, zimmy gamma.
sorry to call out to you like this.
zimmy, we think you're in danger! the court --
the court is comma for me
yeah, we know


you knew?!
course we did.
we felt a change in the court a little while ago.
before we even came here we knew they wanted something in return sooner or later
what you felt was the court altering a device of theirs.
they mean to absorb your power into a method for them to leave this planet.
bahaha! that's crazy!
I got much worse things to worry about than that!


But if they use their omega device to find you -
what?
What do you know about omega?
the omega device? it's a kind of computer, we think.
Kat was just telling me she was going to try and use it to -
that friend of yours?
I should have known!
you tell her to stay away!
Goddamit, I should have known!


you're helping them!
wha...
you already found me, the court ain't got no device!
woah, what?!
annie, you used us to find her?!
no! I'm trying to warn her!
you're trying to kill me!
I thought you was my friend!
how could you?!
how can you say that, zimmy?!

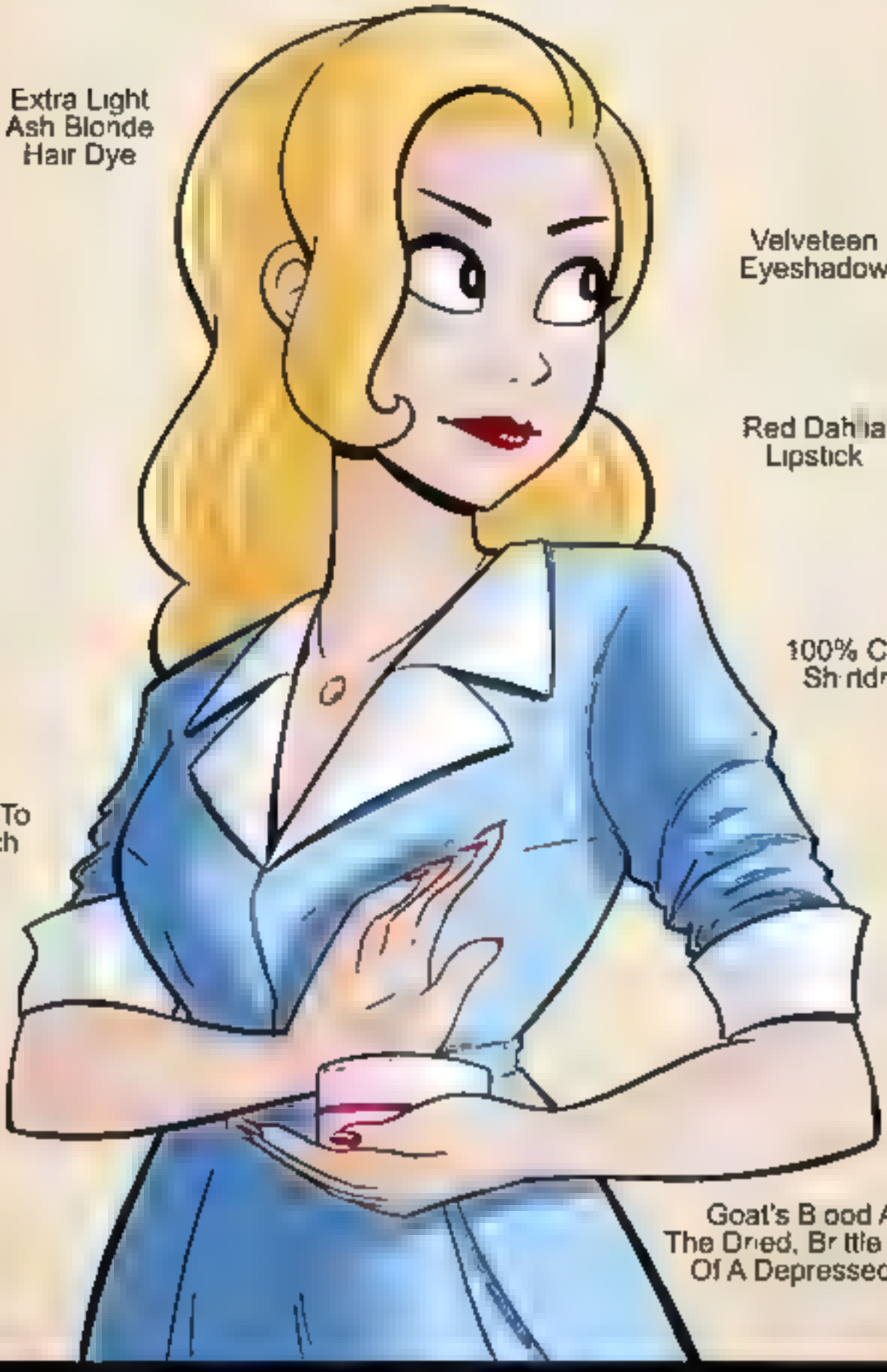

no.
you're gonna kill Loup.
I can see it
and your friend...
she's gonna kill me
I . . I knew it all along.


she's going to use omega to do it...
zimmy


CARVER! What are you up to?
I just... I just wanted to talk to her!
I wasn't up to anything.
Annie, you can't expect we'd help you give Zimmy to the court.
she needs to be protected.
no!
you.
you had us summon her right next to the Star Ocean...
what did you think would happen?!
you have this all wrong!


I... I have to go!
I have to talk to Kat!
Is what Zimmy said true?
will I have no choice but to kill Loup?

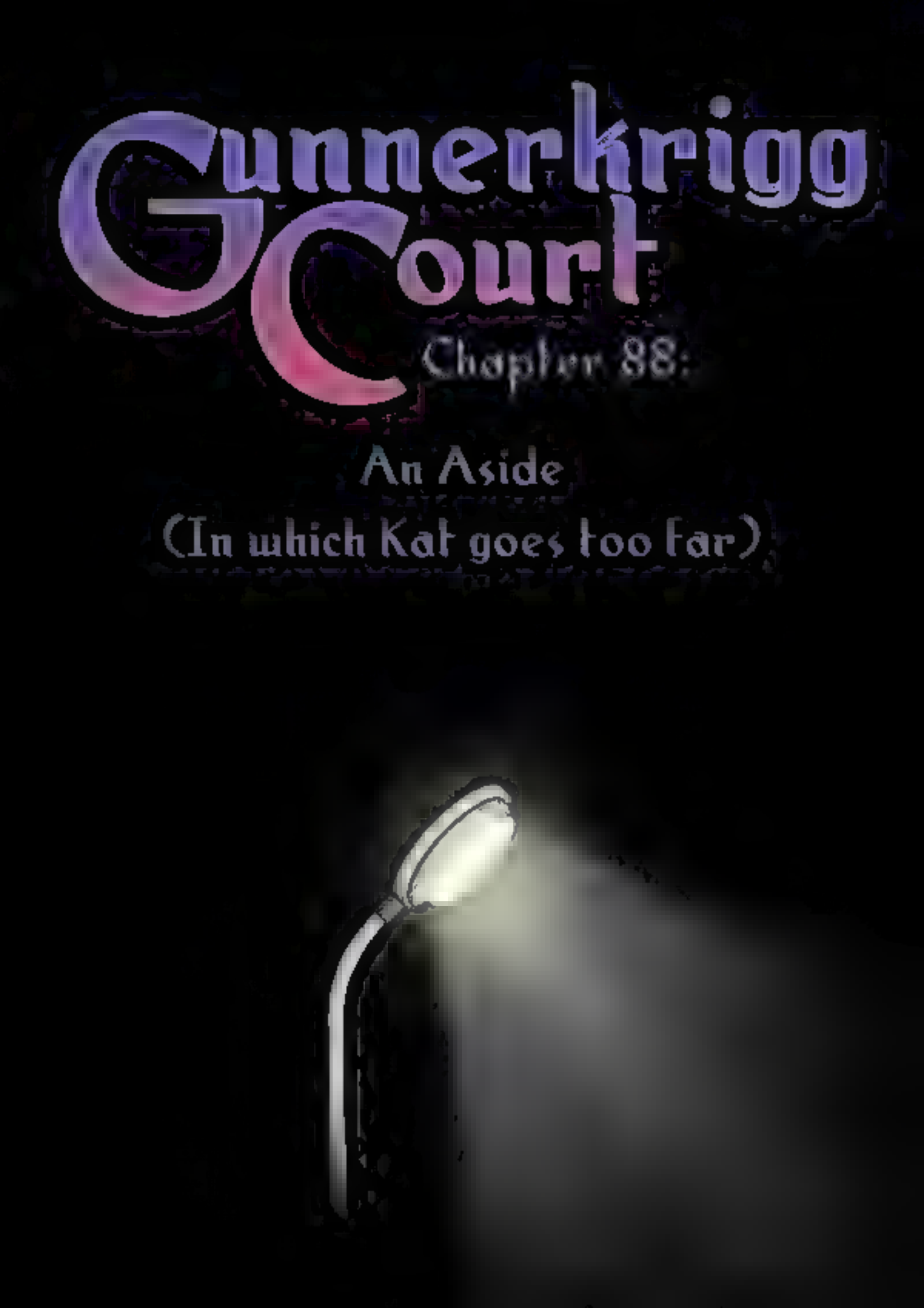
Jenny's Fashion Tips


Extra Light Ash Blonde Hair Dye
Velveteen Eyeshadow
Red Dahlia Lipstick
100% Cotton Shirtdress
Nails To Match
Goat's Blood And The Dried, Brittle Bones Of A Depressed Rat

Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 88:

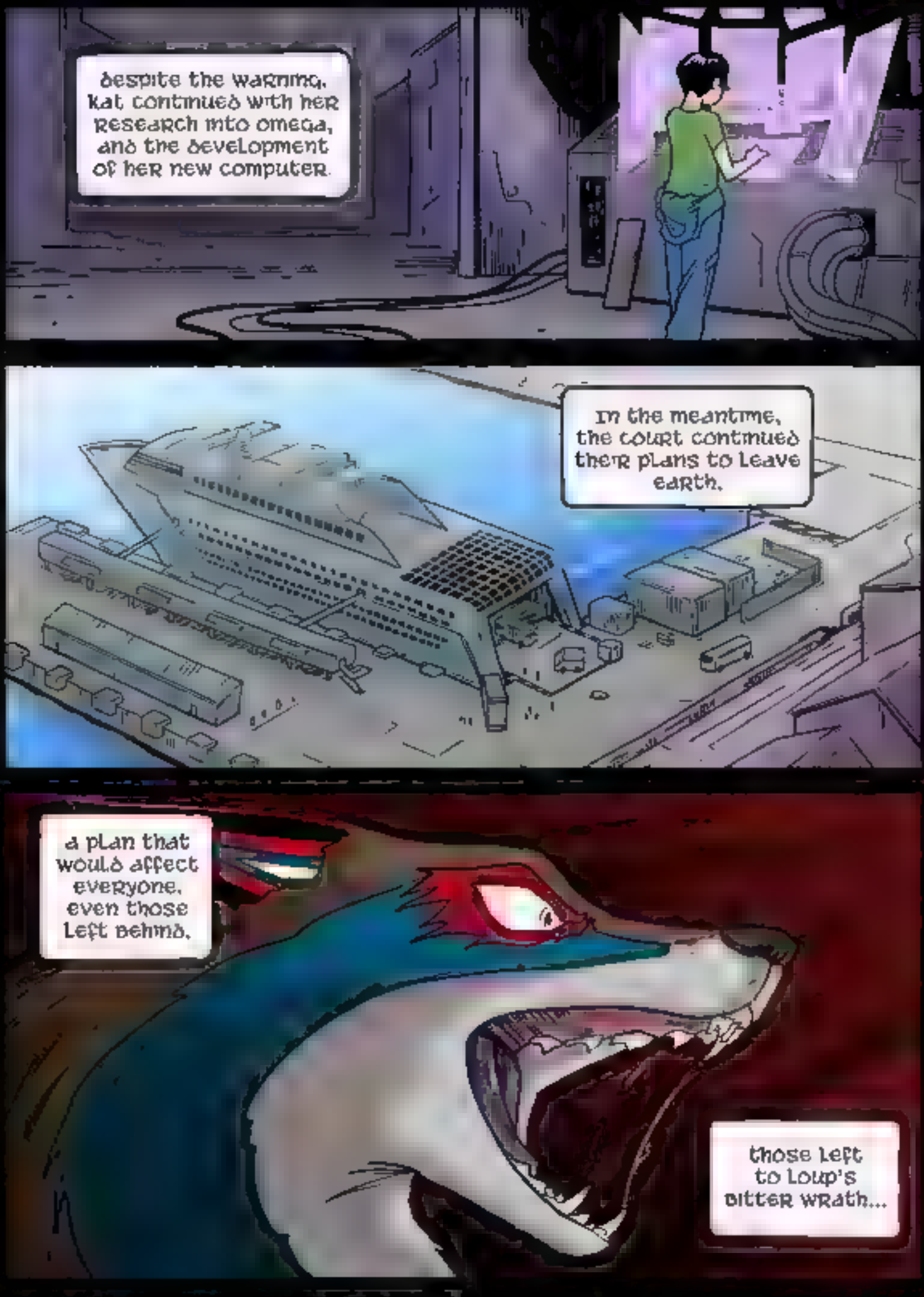
An Aside
(In which Kat goes too far)




one day, the deactivated robots rose from their graves..
but first, a different matter.


I had to tell kat about zimmy's bre predictions...
uh. .
zimmy said I'm gonna do what?


Annie, I'm not going to kill anyone.
Who is this person?
She's that kid from Chester.
Remember, from that boat trip?
She's pretty crazy and she Really hates me for some reason.
How could anyone hate you?!
I know, right?!


despite the warning, kat continues with her research into omega, and the development of her new computer.
In the meantime, the court continues their plans to leave earth.
a plan that would affect everyone, even those left behind.
those left to loup's bitter wrath...


But, again, there came a little matter with Kat.
Ladies.
I would like you...
I've asked you both here because you're the ones I trust the most
to implant this chip into my neck


w-what?!
up to now, I've interfaced with my computer using a soft connection, this keyring here. I always have to keep it with me.
but with a hard link directly into my body, I'll have access to my computer in ways I never could before!
no more of these silly, floating sci-fi panels and junk.
I'll be able to interface directly with any electronic system in the court
a key aspect in my research into omega!


but... but to ask us to implant something directly into your flesh...
like I said, I only trust you guys to do it!
it needs to go right here.
so I can't do it myself.
and I don't want to ask any of the robots to do it
I know you're good with a scalpel, annie!
and paz more than makes up for your bedside manner!
um . what does that mean?


kat... is this safe?
of course!
I got all the stuff you guys would need, right?
we'll need a few extra things...
but it shouldn't be difficult.
hehe, great!
...


soon
you'll feel a little coldness at first.
sure, sure.
when it's installed, I'll just have to activate it with that magnetic coil over there.
hehe, man, this is gonna be so cool!


I built a whole new interface just for this!
It's all server-side, part of my new computer design!
kat, please be still.
oh, yeah, yeah.
but yeah, it's all being fabricated remotely at a new location!
hehe, the court won't know what hit 'em!


there...
It's done. How does it feel?
I can't feel anything!
once the anesthetic wears off it will be a little sore.
you only needed a few butterfly stitches, but try not to sleep on it for a few days
and keep it clean.
sure!
may I?
oh, please.


I'll want to see it tomorrow.
hehe, okay, okay!
now, let's get this thing connected!
CLICK
BANG!


kat!
kat!
cut it out!
cut out the thing in her neck!
CLATTER


stop!
don't do anything!
hello? hello?
kat?
can't... see.
where are you?!
wait, there!
CLICK
hello? dang, I need to find a mic
BEEP
kat!
haha! I can hear you now!
hmm, well.. it kinda worked!


kat... did you upload your mind to your computer?
no! nothing as corny as that!
but, ah... I was so excited about giving my new computer tons of new functions, it caused some conflicts...
I made a protocol that protects me from electric shock, and one that can tap into nearby electric fields, and another that prevents movement during high electrostatic--
kat.
okay, okay look, I'm fine
your account?
um... my body.
It was the coil that overloaded, not the implant.
I'm just locked out of my account right now


But the good news is that it's working as expected!
this is what you call "working as expected"?!
yeah! I can access electrical equipment, cameras, speakers, microphones and more. that's how I'm talking to you!
But I need to restart the whole computer to get my body moving again
well?
oh! it needs to be done in person and my uh, person, is not really mobile right now
soooo. I'm gonna need you guys to go to my computer, remove the conflict, and restart it...


It's kinda hard to get to, which is the point, but I can give you access along the way
and what do we do about... your body?
oh, just throw a blanket over it. haha!
huh. my new cyber-senses indicate you're not impressed by that joke
just move me into the server room, nobody goes back there and I have a folding bed set up.
away we go!


okay, hold still a sec, I can open a guest user entrance portal here.
a wha~
V


pretty cool, huh?!
I'm using the court's dimension compressing technology to keep everything totally safe!


I'm gonna disconnect from here and find a speaker closer to the station I need you to get at
I'll call out to you! see ya!
Kat wai~
hello? kat?
she's gone
well, let's look for this station and listen out for her disembodied voice, I suppose
annie..
I'm so sorry.


excuse me?
I'm sorry for how I've treated you m the past.
oh! paz, you don't need to say that!
you've already apologised before...
I know, but, it was not enough
and.
I was not always honest.
I did feel jealous of your closeness with kat.
not because I thought you'd take her from me!
oh, uh...
but because I could tell that you knew her better than I did.


but paz, you make her happy, too! I know how much she loves being with you!
I know that .. but...
the most important thing to her is her work.
haha, that's true! she loves her work perhaps even more than you or me
and .. I'm not sure I like where her work is taking her.
well! I was surprised by her today, too. this is the first time she's done anything like this to herself...
it's more than that though
I saw . something.


the boat trip...
when things were coming to an end, for a brief second I caught a glimpse of something.
It was kat, but looked... not human. not real.
and the robots fell to their knees in front of her.
did it look like .. tubes and spikes?
yes! you've seen it!
I saw something like that once, yes.
It's something inside kat... or something that she could become


and now with this zimmy girl making these predictions about her..
doesn't it worry you?
well, zimmy has a very particular view of the world.
and she's had a problem with kat right from the beginning
what she said does worry me... but I know kat would never do anything harmful on purpose.
there is something special inside kat we both saw it
but.. I don't know if it's entirely a good thing.


I've thought about that, too.
But...
I trust Kat more than I trust Zimmy, I suppose
And if there was some potential in her that could go bad if left unchecked...
I'd rather stick by her in the hopes I could help point her in the right direction
I think, between the two of us, you and I do a good job of keeping her on the right path.
that is something I always knew.
that you would do what is best for her.
you'll always be her anchor
heeey!
can you hear me?!


HELLOOO?!
KAT! WE'RE HERE!
COOL, COOL!
SORRY IF IT'S HARD TO FIND YOUR WAY AROUND IN HERE!
ANYWAY, WHAT I NEED YOU TO DO IS TYPE SOME INSTRUCTIONS ON THIS TERMINAL.
UMM... UM.
I CAN HELP!
I PICKED UP A FEW THINGS WHEN I'VE HELPED HER OUT.
OKAY, TYPE THIS:
CMD SPACE DASH L SLASH UNMST SPACE DASH -


and the ROLLING RESTART will begin when you hit enter!
I'll be out of communication while it's going, but if you head back to where you first came in, I can get you out!
TAP
BYOOO
CLAC!
CLUNK
CLUNK
I did notice you were a little subdued today, Paz. Was it because of your concerns for Kat?
I was, but not just that.
I'm leaving.


Wha - to the new world? But you wouldn't
no, I'm going back to spam, to my family.
With the court shutting down, I don't think there is a future for me here
But... what about Kat?
oh
Kat was the only thing keeping me here, but today I made up my mind.


I don't know what kat will become, but the journey she's going to take...
I don't think I can be here for that.
I've seen how engrossed in her work she can get, and today
I know it's just a small thing, but I realised this is just the start of kat putting herself in these situations.
It's too much for me.
I'm so sorry, paz. I had no idea you felt this way.
she's going to be devastated.


I know you will do what you can to make sure she is okay.
and with your guidance, I'm sure you will lead her to greatness
but you're a stronger person than I am.
I don't know about that ..
I'll feel safe knowing you're here for her.
hey! can you guys hear me?
yes, kat.
okay! I'll pull you out, hold on!


hey! I told you it'd be okay!
how do you feel?
fine, fine!
better than fine, actually!
SPARK
watch this!


you saw all that equipment, right?
I can build what I want,
teleport what I want.
control what I want!


I can visualise networks in a way I never could before!
not only will I be able to search huge areas of the physical court for Loup, I'll also be able to scan the digitally connected areas for Omega!
once I locate an access way, it'll be a matter of time before I can find my way in!
and not to mention the good I'll be able to do helping the old robots into their new bodies..


Kat, I'm glad you're feeling well, and I'm happy for your new, um, abilities...
but I should be going.
I think Paz might need a word with you.
huh? you need to talk about something?
what's up?
well

Gunnerkrigg Court

Chapter 89: About Those Rabbits




the news spread all across the land (of the new people)
the angel had lost her consort
far and wide, her subjects lamented and vowed to pay homage.
the news even reached those hidden away...


this is an outrage!
how could this happen?!
it's so sad!
she must feel awful!
of all the things the angel puts up with, now this?!
ungrateful!
how ungrateful can one person be?!
I'm surprised how angry you are about this!
the angel is clearly a divine being! she should be treated with much more respect!


you know, I heard some of us are seeking the angel to give condolences...
we should do that, too!
we can bring her news of the traitor!
are you still sure about that?
robot is one of her closest friends! he's such a nice guy!
he's underhanded and duplicitous!
he made a deal with a monster for his own protection at the expense of everyone else!
but... that was you!
details! it's the principle of the thing!


but maybe this will cheer her up?
and... I can begin to make amends myself...
for what I've done.
and... reveal yourself?!
yes.
so that you and I can be together in the open!
oh, jerrek!


how are you today?
super crummy
my first real relationship
over..
it's normal to feel this way.
I'm guessing


um, ah... excuse me, angel,
hi
these are for you, with my regrets
thank you, that's so sweet
I'll teleport them to my workshop, okay?
an honour!
that's been happening all day.


honestly, it's starting to get annoying.
look.
Vip!
they're just trying to make you feel better.
they hate seeing you like this.
I just want to be left alone
but thanks for being here for me.


excuse me, miss.
hi there ~
jerrek! lana!
miss kat, we're so sorry to hear the news!
oh, uh, thanks...
w-we haven't seen you guys in a while...


W-We wanted to give our condolences on this terrible news.
That's okay, guys... Really
But... where have you be~
We have something to tell you!
We have news regarding Loup...
Y-you do?!
But .. let's find somewhere more private.
SHRUG


so, what's up?
you have a traitor in your midst!
huh?
I happen to know that robot, your very own lieutenant...
not only made contact with Loup, but also made a deal with him!
it's true!
he knows how Loup is hiding and he promised he'd keep it a secret, even at the expense of your safety!


how do you know all this?
the truth is...
I am Loup!
well, that part we knew.
ZAP



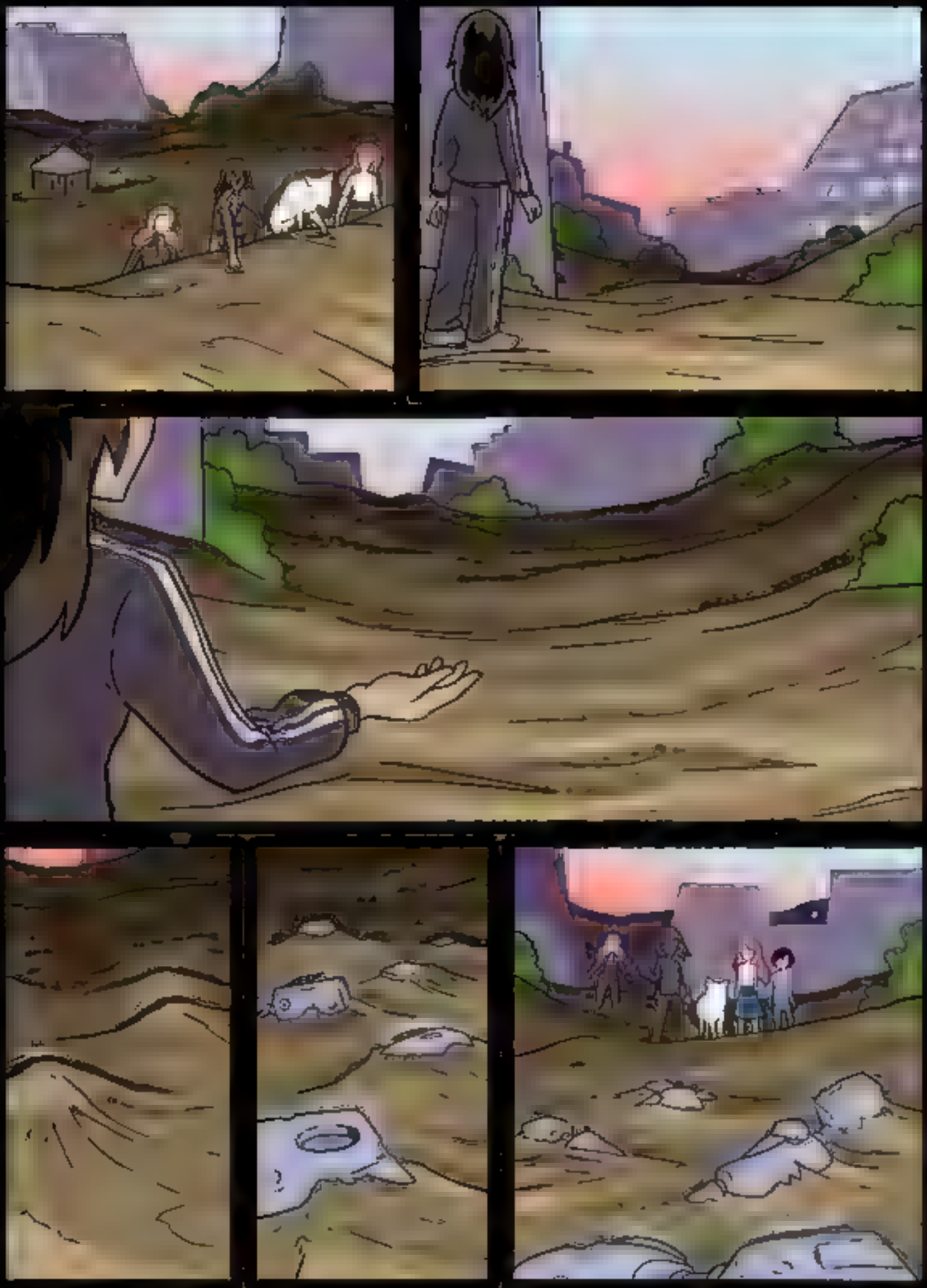

no! stop! he's not here to do anything bad!
what is all this?!
on the way over, I contacted Renard and told him to come here quickly
we knew you were going to do something sooner or later!
I set up this restricting grid remotely, too.
It might not have worked before, but I'll bet you won't be getting past these bars this time...


how-how did you know?!
Robot told us.
what?!
he's not a traitor. or an idiot
he told you what you wanted to hear and then let us know right away.
he lied to me?!
I thought robots cannot lie!
oh, no, court robots are fully capable of lying.
please stop! Jerrek isn't lying!
Lana...
he wants to make amends!
wha


what is she talking about?
no! get that thing away from me!
I don't want to know the rest of coyote's plan!
I don't want that damned tooth back! throw it into the ocean for all I care!
Loup, you can't think we'd believe anything you say.
I don't care if you believe me!
I-I just wanted to bring news to help you!


I'm a changed man!
you're a liar!
no! antimony! you know I don't lie!
if I wanted to do something I'd just do it!
ah!
I know something else I can do to prove my sincerity!


ah! the angel!
If we had known you were coming we would have prepared...
flowers! bring her some flowers!
no, it's okay, guys!
thanks, but we're kind of busy right now...
well? what are you up to?
I hope this will show my sincerity...




I put them under the ground. .
It's fitting that I should raise them up again.


But bringing them back to life, that's something only you can do...
angel.
Miss Angel! What's happening?!
Are these the rest of the missing robots?!
I can see...
Yeah, this is the last of them...
they're all here!


What caused this change in you, Loup?
When I first disguised myself amongst the new people, I didn't think much of their talk of the angel.
When I looked at her I saw nothing but a mere human
uh...
But as I worked along side them, and I saw her powers grow, I realised there was something I could not see.
something that elevated the angel above all the others..
uhhhh .
and most of all, she was responsible for bringing me to Lana.


annie, I'm going to teleport chips back to the workshop but I need to go there myself to oversee some stuff!
that's fine.
renard and I will be okay with loup.
I mean jerrek.
here, now that I know his location, I can keep track of him.
If he does anything weird, just press this button to spring a cage around him.






antimony...
I'm sorry things didn't work out between us.
um, excuse me?


Last time we spoke, you must have known I was in disguise.
but it still seemed like you liked me...
I did like you, Jerrek.
when you weren't being boastful and vulgar as Loup, I could see there was still a hint of ysengrin somewhere inside you.
I knew Lana would be safe when you ran off, since Robot made you promise to not harm any of the new people.
as long as you were in disguise as Jerrek, we were hoping you wouldn't be causing more trouble!
and... when you were acting like a nice, normal boy, it seemed like you liked me too.


I ~ I do like you!
maybe it is because of a part of ysengrm still inside me...
but I know that I don't want any harm to come to you.
I... I regret the things I have done.
maybe being in disguise helped me see things that way.
and above all, made me realise I was in love...
well, that's wonderfu~
HA!


HAHAHA
HAHA
AHAHAHAHAHA